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## A Little Girl in Old Chicago

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# A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD CHICAGO

By AMANDA M. DOUGLAS



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## CONTENTS

CHAPTER.	PAGE.
I THE LITTLE GIRL . . . . .	1
II GETTING DINNER . . . . .	15
III THROUGH THE WINTER . . . . .	30
IV A POLITICAL DIFFERENCE . . . . .	44
V OF COMMON DAILY THINGS . . . . .	61
VI THEN THE UNCOMMON . . . . .	85
VII FROM THE LITTLE GIRL'S SIDE . . . . .	100
VIII WITHOUT NORMAN . . . . .	117
IX WAS EVER LETTER HALF SO DEAR? . . . . .	130
X A WILD RIDE . . . . .	147
XI A TIME FOR LOVE . . . . .	165
XII NOT MERRY, BUT WEDDING BELLS . . . . .	179
XIII A SHADED SIDE . . . . .	194
XIV A TURN IN THE LANE . . . . .	209
XV HOW MUCH WAS LOVE . . . . .	224
XVI HER RIVALS . . . . .	243
XVII POLLY . . . . .	262
XVIII DAN . . . . .	276
XIX HOW NORMAN CAME HOME . . . . .	294
XX THE PASSING OF OLD CHICAGO . . . . .	312



## CHAPTER I

### THE LITTLE GIRL

IT is one of the compensations of Providence that after the storm and stress of active life is through, one can go back to the beautiful world of memory and live over the earlier joys with a delight not experienced in youth.

So the time I first saw the Little Girl is one of the pictures that line the halls of remembrance, softened, and it may be rendered more beautiful, by the intervening years, and love.

It was a late September evening, at least the day had waned. All the west still held the peculiar rich glow of a magnificent sunset that had melted now into one great sheet of softened tints, with no one distinct color predominating, and changing every instant. Over the great lake it dropped iridescent hues, and even the river, with its muddy banks, shimmered in a glorified light. And I, Norman Hayne, sat idly outside the log end of the house, that was our real living place, though the frame addition had been added, for we had long ago outgrown the other. There

was a rude porch over the door, where the Michigan rose rioted in the early summer, and morning-glories later on. Beyond this was a bench with a pail, one or two basins and a dishpan piled with dishes, where my mother would presently stand, washing up. Various utensils hung from the edge of a narrow shelf, a gourd dipper and one of cocoanut. Out beyond, on the garden fence, was the churn dasher and the churn on a low pole.

Early August had been hot and dry, then had fallen copious rains and everything had taken a new lease of life. I was looking idly over to the eastward, wondering what the "States" were like, though it would seem from the influx of emigrants and their tales that they held every variety of climate and productions known to the world.

I watched a great covered wagon lumbering along, drawn by two not over large but stocky horses. In a vague fashion I said to myself—"Some one from the States." It had not the air of a near-by native.

The driver jumped down with a loud "whoa," and the animals, nothing loth, stood still. We were back perhaps fifty feet from the road, though it had a name as a street.

Mother came out just as the man walked up the path. She was rather stout, somewhat weather-beaten with our fierce winds, but fresh and wholesome looking, with a kindly smile, that had not been banished by the scoldings she had found necessary to use. Her hair was a soft dun-colored brown, her eyes brown

also, with a sort of twinkle in them that sometimes flashed in the heat of anger.

The man gave his faded wool hat a tug. He was of medium height, much seamed and wrinkled by exposure, with shrewd blue eyes, rather reddish hair and a sparse ragged beard, the sort of man who would hardly attract a second look.

"Ma'am," he began, in a respectful tone, "can you tell me just how I shall find the Towner place, and can I reach it to-night?"

"Well—" mother looked over westward—"I can't say I should advise you to attempt it. It's crost the river. An' ther' ain't much but a tumble-down log hut. Be you the man goin' to live ther'? Towner traded off the place an' was in high feather 'bout his bargain."

The man looked rather crestfallen. "I was in hopes I could. But then it's good to be so near," with a sigh of content in the voice. "There's some taverns about, I suppose, though, for that matter, we could take another night in the wagon."

"What fambly is ther'?" and mother peered out rather curiously.

"Only me and my little gal. There's such big stories told about Chicago."

"An' they're comin' out the little end of the horn," said mother with a short laugh. "You can hardly give lots away."

The man stood rather uncertain.

"See here," began mother, who was hospitality itself, "we can put you up for the night. S'pose you

unhitch and take a bite of supper. It's tough goin' to a strange place in the dark, an' a tavern ain't jest the place for a little gal. Norme, you great lazy lout, stir your stumps, and show the way to the barn. Bring your little gal in here, Mister. I declare for it, a gal is quite a treat. I've five boys an' I'm countin' on the time they get married so's I can see a petticoat around."

"Do I come up here?"

"Yes." I was off with a bound and began to turn the tired beasts up the roadway. Just at the stoop I paused.

"I'm mighty obliged to you," he began, bowing to mother. "'Tisn't everybody you find willing to take in a stranger. But I'm going to stay if I can squeeze out any sort of a living. Times are hard everywhere. Seems as though the bottom's fallen out of everything."

"When the bottom falls out 'er Chicago we fill it in agen," returned mother with a heartsome laugh. "You've come to a queer place, stranger. First, we're way out top of the chimbly wavin' defiance to everybody and braggin' like all possessed, then down we come kerflunk! But we rub our bruises and knock off the soot an' go at it agen."

"That's the way you have to do," was the almost cheerful response. Then he went to the side of the wagon and chirped, and lifted out the Little Girl and put her down. I looked intently at her and she was impressed upon my brain.

A little girl of seven or eight in a faded blue cotton

frock that came two or three inches from her ankles, and her dainty feet were encased in a pair of beaded moccasins. Her light hair, more flaxen than golden, hung about in short loose curls. Her skin was very fair, her mouth like an opening rosebud. But her eyes transfixed one even in the growing darkness. They seemed bathed in dewy sunshine and were of the depth of sapphire, or the blue of a winter night. The brows and lashes were much darker than the hair, the eyes large and clear, but after she had once glanced up fearlessly they drooped and seemed to shine through the lashes.

"You are just a little dear," said mother, and she stooped to kiss her, though she was not at all given to caresses. "And now while they go out to look after the horses I'll fix some supper. I've just cleared it away. My, but it's dark as a pocket in here. I'll light a candle. Have you had a long journey?"

"Oh, days and days! Sometimes we stayed at houses and sometimes in the wagon. There were wolves one night and father shot two, and we stayed one night in an Indian wigwam. The squaws were kind, but the babies were so funny, tied to a board and standing round. I didn't like the food though. I can cook some."

"Haven't you any mother?"

The child sighed. "Mother died a long, long while ago. Why do they have to be put in the ground? I should think they'd be carried up on some high mountain, where it would be easier for the angels to get them."

"And who took care of you?"

"Aunt Getty did. Then she married Silas Bowers and he had seven children. I didn't like them though. Then Gran came out of the poorhouse, and after that some of the things were sold, only what we could pack in the wagon. It was very nice at first. We stopped by the woods and made fires and broiled fish and birds that father shot. You make a little stone fireplace so—" and she described the outline with her hands. "And when the wood gets all burned to coals you can broil, or you can fry in a skillet."

"You're a smart little thing," declared mother in amazement. "Why you're not much bigger than a minute."

"Why a minute is sixty seconds, and what do you suppose the seconds are?"

"I'm sure I don't know," and mother laughed.

It looked cheery enough when I came in. It should have been painted as an "Interior in Old Chicago." The room was large with a great fireplace at one end, the logs had been chinked in with plaster and then plastered over again, quite roughly to be sure. Every spring and fall mother whitewashed it. Now it was rather smoky. Dan and I had put up a kind of dresser on one side, shelves braced up by side brackets and a curtain hung over them. Our chairs had tough reed grass bottoms, braided in a fashion learned from the Indians. There were several gun racks, and some trophies of hunting. On one side was a roomy settle that did duty as a bed, with dried grass pillows and

cured skins, some quite valuable. Mother had two candles lighted on the table, and they shed a sort of weird light around. She was warming up some chicken potpie, and there was a great plate of brown bread and white, and another of gingerbread and an appetizing sauce of wild grapes.

Mr. Gaynor had stopped at the bench and washed face and hands with a great flourish of enjoyment. Now he sniffed at the savory fragrance with the eagerness of a hungry man.

"Jest draw up," said mother, nodding to a chair. But she placed one for the Little Girl and would have lifted her in it, only she slipped by with the liteness of a fairy.

"What is your name, Sissy?"

"Ruth—Ruth Gaynor," was the gentle reply.

"And I am John Gaynor from old Massachusetts. I've wondered along the route what evil spirit enticed me to leave the State where I was born, but somehow luck turned against me, and the farm was a bed of rocks, as one may say—worn-out land. There's to be a great wheat-growing country out here, folks say, and bread is one of the things that doesn't seem to go out of fashion. Jerusalem! but there's a sight of folks growing up all the time. When the world gets full I s'pose it'll have to come to an end, for if it is full of folks, stands to reason there won't be no room for wheat growing."

"Laws a' massy, I never thought of that," said mother. "But ther's wars and plagues an' what not. Sissy, you ain't eating no supper."

"I'm eating slow, tastes so good," returned Ruth gravely, looking up with shining eyes.

There was a sudden rush and howl and she started in terror, turning pale.

"It's them dratted boys," explained mother, going to the door. "Boys—" one or two of them had a resounding cuff—"you air worse'n a pack of wolves! Now jes' wash up in some sort o' quiet or you'll get your father's horsewhip. An' then go straight to bed. Go round 'tother way."

"Who's here?" both in a breath.

"That's nothin' to you. Do as I tell you."

"There air three of the noisiest boys in all Chicago. Dan, he's quiet and grouty like when things don't go to suit, but he's smart. This here boy's slow an' easy like, an' not given to tantrums, an' I guess we'll have to make a 'pason' out of him. Then there's Homer an' Ben 'n Chris, an' they'd tear the house down if they got at the underpinnin'. Norman here should have been a gal! My! but I was disappointed when he come. I'd jes' set my heart on a gal. Then I got kinder hardened and didn't care. Boys!"

She went out again and presently there was a giggling and a scuffling off. There was an outside covered stairs leading to the attic over this end of the house and the boys slept there.

I had been watching the Little Girl. I had no word for it then, but I knew afterward it was daintiness that enveloped her. She sat up so straight and ate so quietly, even in drinking her glass of milk she made no noise. Then she looked up at mother and smiled.

"It was such a good supper," she said, and her eyes shone with dewy softness. Then she turned a little and glanced at me, and I felt my cheek burn from some unwonted cause. Not but what girls had looked at me before, and I had romped with them.

"I'm wonderfully obliged, ma'am," and Mr. Gaynor rose from the table. "The beasts, too, are thankful no doubt. Hoping presently you'll be better paid, though I take it that kindness isn't ever made quite straight with money, and I'm glad enough to be so near my journey's end. What sort of a place is Towner's?"

Mother looked at me. "You can tell best, Norme," she said with a nod.

"It's just a little 'tother side of the river. The log house isn't much. There's quite a garden spot, then it runs out on the prairie, and up the lake. He cut some of it up in blocks and sold, but I heard pop say he had to take it back."

"Is it the town proper?"

"'Twould be hard to tell what's town and what isn't," said mother, "though they're talkin' 'bout organizin' something, an' it's high time there was some sort of head to things. They've been surveying and surveying and laying out streets that cut up gardens and farms. Some people think it'll be a great place, an' others say it can't be anything but a mud hole. You see, the river rises in a freshet, and the wind drives the lake in. It's a mighty good place for ducks. They can sit on the stoop of Tremont tavern and shoot them."

John Gaynor laughed heartily at that.

Mother meanwhile had been putting away the food and gathering up dishes. Now she said:

"Light the lantern, Norman, it's grown so dark. Then bring out the towels. You see," with a light laugh, "I have to train my boys to do some gal's work. I don't see when they have to eat why they shouldn't help clear it away. They'll make all the better husbands."

"Would you mind if I came out and smoked my pipe?"

"Oh, dear no," returned mother cheerfully.

The lantern shed a light down on the bench, I brought out the teakettle and filled the pan, and she began to wash and put the dishes in another pan to drain. Mr. Gaynor seated himself on the round of a tree at a little distance. There was a slight touch on my elbow.

"Couldn't I help dry them?" inquired a soft voice. "If you would find me a towel—"

"Oh, you dear little housemaid!" cried mother admiringly. "But you ought to play lady to-night."

"I used to do it for Gran. And there's so many here. Isn't it fun to have a good many dishes! Oh, please do!" in a coaxing tone.

"Get her a fresh towel," said mother, amused. So Ruth Gaynor and I dried the dishes the first time we saw each other, and with that began a great friendship.

"You'll do for a housekeeper," commented mother. "What a sweet little thing you are! Why I think I shall have to buy you of your father."

"Oh, he couldn't spare me, could you, father?"

She ran and slipped on his knee and put her arms about his neck.

"No, little one," he made answer.

I sat on the end of the bench looking at them, and envying him. I wondered how the soft arms would feel about my neck, the rose-leaf cheek pressed against mine. I was past fifteen and not over fond of browsing about and noisy games, though I was well grown and strong. I liked to read and dream, and I was fond of hearing the men talk when they did not swear too much, or call each other fools too often. I did enjoy their aspirations about Chicago and the boundless west. Chicago was even then an entrepôt for St. Louis, and also the Mississippi, from upper Michigan with its endless stack of furs to Canada, and from thence to Europe. When all these great reaches were waving cornfields and wheat fields, and there should be a port extensive enough to accommodate them all, a gate through which the treasures of the earth and rain and sun should pass, and the gold and silver of the world return!

Well, it was a splendid dream to be laughed at then. But had not voyagers a hundred years before had dreams akin to it?

The Little Girl had fallen fast asleep when her father carried her in. It was very foolish, but I wished I could have kissed the soft, slightly parted smiling lips as mother had.

Mother lighted them into the new part, where there was a small sleeping chamber off the best room which,

no doubt, would have been called a parlor if Dan and I had been girls.

"What a sweet little thing!" mother said with a sigh. "Too nice to come to a wild town like this."

Dan and father were down to the Tremont playing cards and talking politics. Andrew Jackson was still President, a man who had warm partisans and bitter enemies. Then, too, Chicago was beginning to feel the birth throes of a city.

We were up early the next morning. Dan was employed in one of the trading companies, father at the mill, and they were off by six in summer. It was true that I partly did a girl's work helping mother, being deft and light-handed for a boy. I ran out to the stable to see if I had dreamed this wonderful event of the night before. No, there were the horses, who greeted me with a cheerful whinny, and there was the wagon with its patched cover.

Ruth Gaynor was as sweet and charming in the morning as she had been at night. Soon after breakfast they prepared to leave. My mother would accept nothing for her hospitality except a promise that Ruth should come over and visit us. The three younger ones stared at her with boyish bashfulness, and she did not seem to be inclined to make friends with them. I was selfishly glad of it.

I was to pilot them over. Everything has changed so now that it is difficult to find an old landmark. There had been great changes even in my remembrance. Gurdon Hubbard had moved his business to Chicago and erected a brick building on the corner of

South Water and LaSalle streets, the first in the town. Then he had built a warehouse on Kinzie Street and was doing a flourishing commission and forwarding business with vessels plying between Buffalo and the upper lakes, the Eagle line. Back of this a little was the space a block square that Towner had traded for the Massachusetts farm near a thriving city. Then, still farther away, was the tract of prairie.

The house we found in a poor condition. But as if Mr. Gaynor's luck was to begin at once, some parties wished to buy half of this plot and a bargain was struck. That would leave him the house and a garden. There was such a little money that trade and barter was often resorted to, and through a third party he could have lumber enough to build two new rooms on the house and repair the other. There was a tolerable barn and stable.

We cleared up the best room. It was astonishing to see the useful articles and bedding that were stored in the great wagon. We found some second-hand furniture, and by night they were fairly comfortable. It was still pleasant, but we built a roaring fire in the old fireplace to drive away the dampness.

What a day it was to me! How fascinating the Little Girl was in every movement, in her shrewd sayings, her wisdom that seemed much too old for her years, yet she was such a frank, eager child.

"Must you go home?" she asked pleadingly. "Your mother has other boys. Can't some of them help her?"

"I suppose they could be trained to. They have always kept together and are so full of play."

"And do you work all the time?"

"Oh, no, I have been to school. But I am old enough to go to work regularly and mean to soon." I felt as if I would like to be a man at once, though I could give no reason for it.

"I hate to have you go." She caught hold of my hand and swung herself gently to and fro. "I like you very much."

She glanced up out of such clear, shining eyes that she seemed to fill my whole being with their light. My mother had a right to me—had any one ever really wanted me before?

"Will you come to-morrow? There is so much work to do," sighing with a fascinating air.

"I will come to-morrow," I was glad to promise.

"Let me walk down to the end of the street, and then I will turn and run back, and instead of saying good-by say 'to-morrow, to-morrow,' and just watch for the sunrise."

She kept my hand until we reached the corner, then like a fleet little fawn skimmed over the ground, never once glancing back, and I had known her only twenty-four hours.

"I hope you were well paid for your day's work," said my mother laughingly.

## CHAPTER II

### GETTING DINNER

"THE man certainly was a fool," said my father that evening as he sat smoking his pipe. He had taken part in a political quarrel the evening before, and so did not go down to the Tremont to play cards, but read the *Democrat* and made promiscuous comments as he went along.

"What man?" asked mother.

"Why that Gaynor! The idea of selling out a good home in a prosperous State and coming out here! If I could get out of this mud hole to-morrow I just would."

"Oh, no you wouldn't. You have said many a time that Chicago would lead all the Western cities when she was fairly on the march."

"Well—he will never see any of his money or values back again!"

"He disposed of half his plot to Farlie this morning," I interposed.

"What!" The tone was sharp enough to take one's head off.

I repeated my assertion.

"And swapped for another mud hole?"

"No, he wanted lumber and various materials. The rest is in notes."

"Yes, yes, well Farlie'll shave him. Yankees think they are very smart and shrewd, but he will find!" and father nodded vindictively.

"I think that an excellent thing. They want a comfortable home and they must have some one to help out that child. She ought to go to school. She's too little to keep house. I must go over and see her."

"Oh, do," I entreated. "It's hard to have her there alone."

"Yes, men as a general thing haven't much sense about rearing gals."

"Norman," began my father rather abruptly, "you go over to Hubbard's. I heard he wanted some help—a boy good at figuring. When I was twelve years old I turned out to work. You've had a pretty good chance at schooling."

My heart beat with a quick throb. Why, if I could get a situation there I could see the Little Girl every day!

"I'll go the first thing," I replied cheerfully.

"And you needn't stick out about wages. Boys nowadays think they are worth a heap of gold, but they're not. Be content to begin down to the bottom of the line, and thankful that you have the chance."

I was amused. I think I was a rather meek boy and not given to exalting myself.

The three younger ones went to school, and then it was from eight to five, seven months of the year, from nine until four through the winter months. It might have been hard on the teachers, but no one complained.

The next morning when I started out my mother said, "Go and see if that little Gaynor girl is well, and how they managed last night."

I went to the warehouse first. It looked big and business-y in those days. Vessels were lading, men were running to and fro, a few negroes among them. Even at this early period there were protests against slavery in all the Northern States, and the Missouri Compromise was supposed to have settled it. There were hardly a hundred negroes in the town at that time, and some were tall, strong fellows. A few Indians were loitering about, though most had been sent out on the new reservations. They were still considered rather treacherous, though no longer to be feared.

I picked my way among the piles of goods to the sort of counting room. Fortunately I saw a familiar face, Mr. Abner Harris, who had been one of our neighbors, and had now gone over on the north side.

"Well," he began, looking me over from top to toe, "what can I do for you? We're short handed this morning, and if you could take a turn—something of a scholar, ain't you?"

I told him my errand and that my father had sent me.

He nodded in a kind of cheerful way, "Yes, we want

an office boy who isn't afraid of work and doesn't take a nap oftener than every three hours. Can you do lettering? These things should have started yesterday. While we have the promise that the world will be burned up, and not drowned out we can't always count on the wind nor this deceitful lake, which can smile at you and then drive you heaven only knows where! My opinion is that when the old Greek gods were dispersed Neptune took up his residence at the bottom of this lake and enjoys the rumpus he kicks up."

"Neptune?" I was not much acquainted with the Greeks in those days.

"There, don't stand talking all day." I had only uttered one word. "Take that bit of board and copy this, and let's see whether it will be in Latin or High Dutch. This little brush, and here's the paint."

I copied out the address consigned to a Buffalo firm.

"That's fair. You needn't stop to flourish. Now go on with these boxes and bales, seven of them."

It came a little awkward at first, but I saw that I was making a decided improvement. Mr. Harris nodded. Then there was something else. But before noon the boat started off, and as I watched her I half wished I was aboard of her. I had not been a dozen miles out of Chicago in my fifteen years.

Then I thought of the Little Girl.

"You seem to be a likely fellow, Hayne, and you are not continually asking why the sun rises in the East. That stands for any foolish boy question. I half engaged a young fellow yesterday, Sim Chase;

his father is deacon in the church, but he hasn't put in any appearance yet. I shouldn't like to go back on his father. Tell you what I'll do. You come in Sat'day and I'll know then."

"I should like very much to have the place," I ventured; standing on one foot, boy fashion.

He gave a funny twinkle with one eye and said, "Oh, I guess it'll be all right."

I went off with a light heart. It was not far to the Gaynors'. A load of lumber had come and two men were laying a foundation driving piles. Mr. Gaynor was giving orders here and there. Few things escaped his sharp eye. But he only said to me with a curt sort of nod, "Go round there and see if you can't help Ruth."

I was only too glad. She was trying to make the fire burn, and the smoke had filled her eyes with tears. The wood was rather damp and dozy. I looked around for some dry brush; we were not a well-wooded country, and presently I had a cheerful blaze.

"What are you going to have for dinner?" I asked. "Or have you had it?"

"No; father brought in some potatoes and some fish. I can't bear to touch raw fish," and she shuddered.

"Have you any sort of a kettle?"

"Only this," and she exhumed a long-handled stewing pipkin, that the folks farther south called piggins.

"That will do for potatoes if we can find a cover."

"And this frying pan."

"For the fish. We'll have a fine dinner."

"I'm so glad you came. I wonder what I ought to call you?" with a kind of delicate perplexity in her face.

"Why! Norman if you like. Mother and pop shorten it into Norme."

"Did you come from—England—Normandy?"

"No," I laughed. "Pop, I believe, came from York State, and mother's folks from down farther south. You know Chicago isn't a very old place."

"I'd like to hear about it. It seems very queer. And you know we have Plymouth Rock. There were English Governors too, and it is more than two hundred years old."

There was a certain pride in her as she stood there in her faded gown, her tangled curls about her small face, her eyes shining with strength through their lucent light. I could have knelt and kissed her hand.

"And they had to cook dinners two hundred years ago. I suppose they brought over pots and pans in the Mayflower, and salt and pepper. I couldn't find any salt this morning," she laughed merrily, "and I've come in a wagon from Massachusetts. I am an emigrant, am I not? But I almost wish I had not come."

Her voice sank to a pathetic cadence that pierced my heart.

"Oh, no, don't wish that!" I cried earnestly. "And there are some curious stories about Chicago—sad ones, too. We will go to old Fort Dearborn. And for a good many years one man lived here all alone, and LaSalle and Joliet and travellers went to and fro and

left romances in their steps. We will hunt them up some day. But I must clean the fish. Oh, what nice plump fellows!"

"How good you are. I shall like to see those places. I like stories." Her face was aglow with interest. The potatoes were boiling splendidly. I poked in some rough pieces of wood to make another bed of coals, then I addressed myself to the fish and soon had them in frying order. But certainly I must have some salted pork.

I ran down the street a short distance and begged some from a neighbor. Then I drew out the coals and we soon had a savory fragrance.

"Oh, how delicious!" Her eyes fairly shone with pleasure.

Mr. Gaynor came in, his face piquantly wrinkled with expectation.

"I shall have to hire you for cook, my lad," he exclaimed in a joyous tone. "I'm hungry as a bear in March."

"Why March particularly?" I asked.

"When he wakes out of his winter's nap."

"And he doesn't need any table," said the Little Girl glancing about in a lugubrious fashion, with the corners of her mouth quivering.

"I'll fix that. You two deserve a table for such a feast."

He brought in a board and laid it on two boxes; but he decided that we must sit on the floor.

"And we have sat under a tree on the grass many a time, haven't we, father?"

There was such a sound of joyous comfort in her tone it warmed one's heart.

What a feast it was! The fish were browned to a turn, the potatoes we seasoned with the gravy, and there was bread and butter. I can recall a little girl in after life who sat on my knee and never wearied of hearing about this feast.

"Does fall set in early here?" Mr. Gaynor asked. "I want to get the other room done—it will be two, really, for this is nothing but a shack. That Towner must have viewed it with the eye of faith, which is the evidence of things unseen, and they say the winds are something terrible."

"Yes, you'll get them here off the lake, but not so bad as further down."

"What a tremendous lake! It fairly takes one's breath away. And those prairies! Are they good for wheat? A new country ought to be. The corn I see looks fine. Why, it fairly stirs one's blood."

Now and then the Little Girl glanced up with a happy half smile and a light coming and going in her eyes. How she seemed to enjoy it all.

"We're mightily obliged to you, young fellow," Mr. Gaynor said as he rose. "That was a good dinner. But Ruth is too little to shoulder this rough sort of life. I thought I'd see if your mother couldn't find us a woman to come in part of the time, and we want some furniture—table and chairs, and some sort of a cot to sleep on. By the great Mogul! this *is* coming to a new country! and it's beginning from the very foundation."

"Mother spoke of coming over," I said. "I think she can find some one. And next week I hope to go to work at Mr. Hubbard's; then I shall see you often. Oh, I know my mother is very much interested in you."

"And we need a good woman friend, don't we, Little Girl?" as he softly pinched his daughter's cheek. "We can imagine how it was when they came over in the Mayflower. We've come to a new country."

Then he went out to look after his men. We tidied up a little, washed the few dishes and had a merry time, and to my surprise I saw the portly form of my mother peering about as if not quite sure of her bearings. I ran out to her.

"Well, well," and she kissed the Little Girl. "You have had some dinner I know by the smell, and I have brought you a loaf of bread an' a cake an' part of a boiled ham an' a jar of fruit. It's the grandmother bringing something to little Red Riding Hood, only you are not very red. You must get some color in your cheeks."

After we had talked awhile I called in Mr. Gaynor, who laid a few of his plans and his wants before her, and she spoke of some help she thought she could get.

Then she asked to look over Ruth's clothing. There was not much of it, and tied up in a pillow case. Mother gave a few sage nods over it.

"She'll want a couple of woollen winter frocks. I'll conjure them out for her, though I'm quick to say I know more about jackets and breeches. They can wait awhile, but she ought to have a new gingham. You go to church?"

"Well—I'd like her to go if 'twas handy."

"You'll want some dishes an' things, and perversions. But you can't bake nothin' 'cept johnny cake. You'll get a stove? They're mighty handy when you don't have an oven. Though ther's a bake pan that answers."

"When we get in the new room we'll be a little more forehanded as to things. Well, do what's about right," and he gave her some money.

The Little Girl looked with wide open shining eyes as we went along Kinzie Street and turned into La-Salle, where the Cayses kept a country store at that time. There were two or three higher toned ones, where articles were not so promiscuously mixed. At first glance it seemed like moving day. It was long and low, with two counters, one for dry goods and a yard measure, and the other with scales for weighing everything from powder and shot to an ounce of spice, coffee, sugar, honey, molasses, butter, pork, hams, even game that had been traded off for other wants, along with more bulky wares and farming implements.

Ma'am Cayse, as she was generally called, was a short, stout, strong-looking woman with a square jaw, large white teeth, a rather flat nose and a forehead that took full one-half of her face. Her sandy hair was twisted in a tight knot at the back of her head, her skirt was short, showing both homespun stockings and home-made shoes. A sort of loose sacque enveloped the upper part of her body with the sleeves rolled over in a wad nearly to the shoulder.

"Who's gal is that?" she asked abruptly.

"Her father took the Towner place. He's buildin' onto it."

"Some one must have money in sech times as these. It's skace as hen's teeth. I declare to man if I could get holt of half a dollar I'd pinch the eagle 'til he squealed, an' ther's goin' to be a vandue, too."

"Whose vanduin'?" asked mother with a look of interest. People in newly settled places are apt to coin words, I have noticed, and after awhile some of them get regularly accepted.

"Why the Simses, goin' back to Cahoky before cold weather, but I'd go way down to Noo Orleens if I was them and wanted to keep warm. An' 'tother folks go to Canady or up to Mackinac. Ye jest can't count for tastes. What'll ye have?"

Mother ordered with an air of slow indifference. The gingham was really pretty I thought, with some fine lines of blue and red with the black and little squares of white. Some eatables followed in turn, and the ordinary country gossip until the next customer came in. It was rather early for the men to be congregating in a line across the front, smoking their pipes. Those who tarried here were mostly church-going people who would not be seen at the taverns, but dearly loved to argue politics or religion.

"I'm glad she spoke of that vandue," said mother when we were out of hearing. "Ther' may be a chance to get a bargain."

For bargains were as dear to women's hearts then as now.

We rambled down the river side, then crossed the bridge and came up to recross it again. Mr. Gaynor had impressed some new workmen in his service and matters were being pushed ahead rapidly.

"And while mother goes to the vandue we will take a walk," I said. "We'll go to Fort Dearborn, and I'll tell you the story. Only it is very sad."

"The Indian stories always are," she said with a sigh. "Do you suppose God made them cruel like because they had to fight each other so much? And what is there clear out west when they get there?"

I shook my head. We had not much faith in the noble red men in those days, and those lingering about Chicago were rather disreputable.

Mother settled with Mr. Gaynor about going to the Simses' sale, and I arranged to take Ruth to Fort Dearborn. I would have only two days more.

Father was confident the mantle of honor would fall upon me. Sim Chase he declared a lazy lout. They had tried him at the mill.

The weather was still superb. Ruth and I crossed the bridge and picked our way over the dusty roads. Surely we needed rain—we were always either dust or mud.

No one remarked the Little Girl in her faded frock and sun-bonnet, now nearly white. Now and then someone looked sharply at me, and it brought the color to my cheek. I had never thought about girls. I had gone to a boys' school and had been pretty busy with lessons and rather fond of staying home with mother and hearing her talk of her young days. I had no

especial consciousness about a girl now, my only wish being that she was truly my sister and lived with us.

It is all swept away but the tablet and the monument. But before the last century had ended, by the treaty of Granville with five Indian tribes, a piece of ground six miles square at the entrance of the Chicago river was set aside for the building of a fort where there had once been a French trading post. It was a stockade with block houses, to be one of the chain for outposts of defence for the trade growing of more importance every year. Down here came Captain Whistler and his son and the two wives from Detroit, with the company for work and for defence, and bravely they went at their task. On the north side was the sally port or passage leading from the parade ground to the river, to be used as an escape in time of emergency. There were no horses or oxen and the men hauled the wood. There were Indian outbreaks now and then, but the little colony increased and all about the fort clustered a settlement.

And so it remained for about nine years. The women had learned to be as brave as the men, as fearless too. Then came the sudden and unexpected orders from Detroit to evacuate the fort, as Detroit was to be surrendered to the English. There had been numerous Indian raids on other forts.

The Pottawattamies had been very good friends with the soldiers and the dwellers about. But when they heard that General Hull had ordered that the property in the fort was to be distributed among the Indians they secretly joined the marauding bands,

though they promised a safe-conduct to those within. Captain Wells ordered the whiskey to be poured into the river, and the powder to be destroyed, knowing the liquor would make fiends of the savages. So one August day they started, women, children and wagons, guarded by the soldiers; but when they had gone a mile or so from the fort, they found themselves almost surrounded by Indians, the remnants of various tribes that had not moved to the reservation, and the Potowattamies joining them, the dreadful massacre occurred. A number were carried prisoners to St. Joseph.

Mrs. Heald, who had brought with her from Kentucky, on her marriage, a beautiful mare, which had aroused the envy of two Indian chiefs, who had made several attempts to steal it, rode out of the fort, but as soon as the raid was made she was forced to dismount and see her favorite in the hands of the savages, and she was led back to the fort a prisoner, while her husband was killed and treated with cruel indignity. Then the Indians took possession of the fort and held pandemonium for a few days. Afterward the Indians went off to attack Fort Wayne.

We rambled about the fort that had been rebuilt later on, and was now being evacuated for the second time, the victories over the rambling bands of Indians having made the country quite secure. Ruth Gaynor had heard of massacres in her native State not less cruel.

"But Mrs. Heald and her beautiful horse?" she queried with pathos in both eyes and voice.

"No money could buy it back. Some Indian chief thought too highly of his four-footed prisoner to give it up. Mrs. Heald, badly wounded, for she had fought bravely for her freedom, was left for a few days with an Indian trader at St. Joseph's and was finally permitted to return to Louisville. Some of the prisoners were taken up to Michigan and given their liberty on the recapture of Detroit. The fort was set on fire and made a heap of ruins. Several of the prisoners returned, but for a long while the station was well-nigh deserted by immigrants."

It looked deserted now. A drooping flag waved over it, but there was no glitter of arms or soldiery tread of sentinels. Business was taking the place of picturesque romance.

"You know," Ruth said in an awed voice, "there are stories of ghosts appearing. Did no one ever see Mrs. Heald on her beautiful horse riding out, or around?"

It was growing toward night now, and the drifting clouds had obscured the sunset. The lake stretched off weird and dark. We had climbed some steps and now we looked and listened and then glanced at each other. The spirited form of the woman who had fought for her life should have appeared.

"Come, we must go home," I said. I was conscious of a curious impression stealing over me.

"I should like to see *her*," Ruth said longingly. "I do not think I should be a bit afraid."

I took her hand and helped her down. "We will come again," I said, "but mother will wonder what has become of us."

## CHAPTER III

### THROUGH THE WINTER

THE workmen were just leaving off when we reached the place that was to be home for the Little Girl, and where she was to spend many happy days. To-morrow they were to raise the framework. There was no eight-hour day or discussion at that period. I gathered an armful of blocks and made the fire. We broiled slices of ham and had some excellent bread, in the making of which my mother excelled. Mr. Gaynor was much interested in Fort Dearborn, and strong in his denunciation of General Hull delivering up Detroit, as it had inspired the Indians with hopes of re-conquest of many of the posts. But heroic Anthony Wayne had soon turned the tide.

"I thought you were going to stay all night," exclaimed my mother rather tartly, "or that ther' had been a new Indian raid and you had lost your head-piece. Ther' ain't much sense in it. 'pears like, but you'd look rather queer without it."

I only laughed a little. It was the best way of restoring her to good humor. The men were nearly

always off playing cards. Dan was nineteen, a fine strapping fellow, good looking too, and a great hand for argument. A little one between Dan and myself had died.

Mother went to the vendue and bought some necessary furnishings for the new house. Meanwhile the frame had been raised, the near neighbors turning out to help. Mr. Gaynor's being a Yankee went rather against him, but the fact that he had some cash to pay out evened up matters. He treated generously to whiskey—they were steady drinkers in those days—and could stand a good deal. He was very abstemious I learned afterward.

Mother also found an old colored woman, half a century seemed to age the negroes then, and Aunt Becky had grandchildren grown up. She was quite a famous cook, and at the rush times at the taverns, holidays and political gatherings cooked for the feasts. Any of them would have employed her all the time, but working steady was her aversion. She was persuaded, however, to go for two or three hours a day, until better, or steadier, help could be obtained.

I dropped in at the warehouse and found to my great joy that I had secured the position.

"Now you've only got to carry yourself straight and keep a civil tongue in your head," said my father, "and you'll get a good business insight that'll make your fortune some day, if you have brains enough; and you keep out of taverns and cards and let whiskey alone until you get ballast enough not to run aground."

There was, I suppose, a good deal of dissipation in

those days, but men were strong and hardy too. Quarrels were not infrequent and occasionally had a desperate ending. But there were some admirable homes, and mothers who left a strong moral impress on their families. The living had a certain fine simplicity if it was not so intellectual.

I liked my new place very much. I was general factotum, to be sure, with occasionally an over-measure of hard words. Mr. Harris always stood my friend. He soon found that I was ready at figures and had what he called ideas; my mother's homely name for it was "gumption." Mr. Gaynor used the word also.

Did any one then, with all the boasting and bragging, imagine that in half a century Chicago would spring into wonderful prominence, outstripping older towns with a vivid maturity, be burned to ashes, rise again and lift itself not only out of ashes but out of the slough, and if it could not be a city set on a hill, still become marvellous in its advancement of all kinds? I thought then that Eagle fleet of vessels was simply astonishing with the freights they carried across the lake. Men were fighting then for a canal, a clear waterway to the Mississippi without any portage.

I liked to hear Mr. Harris's reminiscences of the town. LeVasseur & Hubbard opened the first dry-goods store about 1820. Mr. LeVasseur was a fine man and did a good deal of trading with the Indians for furs, and had several outlying posts. Mr. Hubbard was a very public-spirited and ambitious citizen.

Then for years he coasted up and down the lake in Canadian bateaux, commonly known as Mackinaw boats. Some years before this he had erected a large brick building on LaSalle Street, often termed Hubbard's folly, where beef and pork were packed for the outlying trade. His faith in the town was undaunted by the numerous mishaps, and he was Commissioner of the Illinois and Michigan canal, and turned the first shovel of dirt on the nation's birthday, July fourth, though it languished for several years.

I went early and often stayed late, but ran away at noon to see how it fared with the Little Girl, though I found my mother was taking a useful oversight of her. The house went along as if by magic. I can recall our reading a few fairy stories later on about palaces springing up in a night, and she laughingly said—"That was the way with our old house, do you remember?"

The main room had a wide fireplace, the smaller one beside it was for Ruth, and here stood her cot and a rude dressing-table and bureau, which was simply a large box shelved, with a curtain drawn before it. Then the old log house was patched up and made into a comfortable kitchen. There was plenty of scrubby pine for firewood when one could get nothing better. Mother's vendue furniture comprised a large table, with leaves supported with a brace and let down when not in use, a cot, a bedstead set up in the best room, quite a fashion then, several chair frames that could be new seated and various kitchen utensils with some dishes.

Mr. Gaynor was a "handy" man, an ingenious Yankee. In a couple of months he was in great demand, and his odd jobs supplied the family living, for money being a scarce commodity, barter was much in favor. He was very shrewd at bargain making, but he had a pleasant, half-whimsical way with him that made and kept friends.

There were several schools now, though it did not need a very old resident to remember the first one opened at the end of Mr. Kinzie's garden, where the children spelled in concert out of the book found in a tea chest, and learned arithmetic orally. Then Mr. Watkins taught boys in a room off the postoffice, or rather the building used for that and sundry other purposes.

A Miss Chappel with her friend, Mary Barrows, came from Mackinaw and opened a school for girls and young children. Afterward Miss Chappel married the Presbyterian minister, Reverend Mr. Porter, but she still took a warm interest in education. Miss Barrows went on with the school.

We were Methodists, though for some years every denomination had been represented. A veteran Methodist preacher, Rev. Jesse Walker, had succeeded in building a small frame church at Clark and North Water streets. The women were the most regular church goers. The children were fond of the Sunday School, for a large part of the exercises consisted in singing.

Mr. Gaynor was pleased to have Ruth go. Big boys were apt to stray off, but I was very regular now,

and often walked home with the Little Girl, and on these occasions we had fine fun cooking supper. Then we would sit before the fire and talk or read. Books were not very abundant. Mr. Gaynor had an old Bible, the "Pilgrim's Progress," a copy of "The Lady of the Lake," and a few old school books. The "Pilgrim's Progress" we found very entertaining. To us it was real travels, and the characters absolute people.

Ruth came over to the house often on Saturday, as Miss Barrows kept that day for herself. She learned to cook, to sew and began to spin a little. She knew how to knit, except that she did not quite understand shaping a stocking.

The boys were rather rough and shy at first, but after a little they quite adored her, and hunted up curious things for presents. Homer was a jolly sort of lad, Ben rather gentle, but Chris rough and tormenting. I used to envy them the Saturdays.

Winter set in early. What tremendous winds scurried across the lake, beating up great waves, or rushed down from the north and sometimes threatened to drown us out! Navigation had to be given up mostly; we had not then learned what fitters and warders to put on the inland sea.

And then the snow! The great drifts blowing in from the prairies, the roads trodden down as solid as stone, the sledges and rude sort of sleighs, the jingle of bells for those who were lucky enough to own any. Part of the time the Little Girl could not venture out, though Ben often brought her home on his sled.

"But it is all so beautiful," she said, looking over

the wide prairie one Sunday. "Norman, what is over beyond the Mississippi?"

"Mountains and mountains."

Some hardy explorers had gone out, but we knew nothing of the western coast then.

"And then?" with gentle insistence.

"The Pacific Coast."

"The Delectable Mountains and the beautiful land where the shepherds are feeding their flocks, and where there are vineyards and gardens and flowers of every hue and fragrance. It is the Promised Land, Norman. Some day you and I will start and travel—it will take weeks and weeks, and we shall be filled with delight at its loveliness. We will start quite by ourselves, and keep our secret until we do go."

She looked gravely inspired as her eyes turned westward over the wastes of snow.

Years afterward we were to go to the beautiful land and wander among orange groves and vines and figs and such flowers as we had not dreamed of then, but the name of the country was California.

I put my arm over her shoulder. How fair she was, and her sapphire eyes shone with a kind of unearthly light. Now and then there came over me a strange sort of fear as if sometime she might vanish away to an unknown world and I be left alone.

"You are cold," I said; "come in doors."

The great log had burned in twain and now broke with a crash, sending up myriad sparks while the red coals seemed to pulsate like living things. I stirred

them up, brought the ends together, and the next moment we had a magnificent blaze.

"Oh, let us pop some corn," she cried. She was down to earth again. "Yes, it does feel lovely here by the fire. I'll go for the corn."

But I thrust down my arm in the great box and brought up two ears, so that I could shell one with the other. Mr. Gaynor, with the aid of the blacksmith, had made a tolerable popper. I drew out the coals and then shelled a handful. She held it and shook it from time to time, and we laughed at the snapping and bouncing. We took off the lid. It wasn't just the kind of corn to turn inside out, like a white rose, but some of it was very soft and velvety. I liked the really roasted grains the best. She, girl-like, preferred the more delicate ones. So we laughed and ate our fill until we were thirsty.

"Oh," she began suddenly, "let us read 'The Lady of the Lake.' "

I did not think I was very fond of verse. It suggested the hymn book that I looked over now and then, and that always left an uncomfortable feeling in my mind.

She hunted up the book, and bringing a small stand near the fire lighted the candle. We had made the blaze of the pine torch standing up in the corner do duty until then.

"I am going to read," she began. "I liked it so much one day. But you must sit up very straight and not go to sleep. This first part about the Harp of the North, I don't care for, so I'll begin here.

"The stag at eve had drunk his fill,  
Where danced the moon on Monan's rill—'"

Then she suddenly paused, "This is all in Scotland.  
Do you know where Scotland is?"

"It is north of England."

"We haven't liked England over well. Grandmother Marvin used to talk about the War of 1812, for grandfather was a sailor and was killed. And there was all the Revolution. Do you think we will ever fight England again?"

"If we do we'll lick her again," I said with boyish American grit.

"I shouldn't mind war against the Indians," she said slowly. "And I do hope England will stay over the other side of the ocean, and—Norman," hesitatingly, "did you ever see a real deer?"

"Why, yes. That's where they get venison steak."

"Oh, now, I will begin again."

She read very clearly and with the appreciation that gives the listener an insight into the real meaning. I could not have gone to sleep. The chase stirred all my blood, but I was glad the deer escaped. The lovely lake among the mountains, the maiden in her skiff, the encounter, the guidance, the enchanted hall, the welcome to the unknown knight of Snowdoun, and the promise of the song. Why, I remembered lines of it and said myself to sleep with them.

"That is the end of the first canto. Next Sunday night you shall read. It sounds like music, doesn't it?" closing the old book.

"Yes," I assented. It still rang in my ears.

There was a shuffling and stamping at the door. Mr. Gaynor beat out his old hat on the post.

"Jerusalem! The old woman's feather bed has burst open this time, I guess. Why, you can't see your hand before you. I've been in snows before, but this is about the worst old tougher I ever encountered. Norme—" he had taken up the familiar name—"thank your stars you are this near the warehouse, if, indeed, you can get there at all to-morrow morning. But I don't suppose there'll be much trade," with a short chuckle.

I knew that was an invitation to stay all night. I had stayed twice before in a pouring rain.

"Oh, let's see!" Ruth sprang up.

But as she opened the door a swirl of snow flew nearly across the room, and she staggered.

It took both of us to shut the door and then we put up the bar. For a few moments it was a primitive cyclone. Ruth brushed the snow out of her hair and eyes and laughed. Mr. Gaynor stirred up the fire.

"I hope you're satisfied. You saw the snow," he said jocosely.

The wind swept about with a murderous howl as only a western prairie wind can. A flock of wolves could not have equalled it in the shrieks. Then there would be a long bay like that of some great hound, or a mocking whistle as if the fiends were abroad. We really could not talk. Mr. Gaynor helped himself liberally to roasted corn.

Presently it died down and was solemnly still. The Yankee clock on the corner shelf in the best room—

John Gaynor could not have lived without that—struck nine.

"Time to be coverin' up fires," he said. "Sis, you run to bed. Want to see the snow again?"

"Yes, I do," with laughing persistence.

He opened the door cautiously. The great white sheet was like a wall. You could not see it stir at first, but there was a muffled sound in the air, an indescribable sound almost like the echo of music miles and miles away.

"It is wonderful!" the Little Girl said, her eyes like a clear midnight sky. "It is a strange world, terrible sometimes, too."

"Better spread that wolf skin over your bed," her father advised as he returned her good-night.

I crawled over to the back part of John Gaynor's bed, though there was a great mound of feathers between us. People were hale and hearty in those days, if they did sleep half buried in feathers. But it seemed to me all night long that I heard the melody of the little girl's voice in the sweetest of cadences.

It was the first big snow of the season and now it was mid December. One had to begin at once to dig out window shutters and doors, but as the doors opened on the inside they were more manageable. It was still gray and cold and one had to be muffled up to the eyes. We shovelled a path out to the road, then threw it this way and that until it was a decent level and hammered it down with a shovel. Then we took the back to the pigpen. We heard the grunts, so they

were not frozen. Indeed they had a tolerably warm home provided for them.

Ruth made pancakes. Mr. Gaynor had quite a large round ring of iron that one put on the coals. The pan stood on the top of this; a good big pan it was, and the batter was poured out of the pitcher. Ruth liked small, dainty cakes, her father enjoyed them about as big as a dinner plate. He had a curious knack of turning them without flopping. He liked them quite thick as well, so he baked several first.

"Those little fellows ain't a mouthful for a good-sized man!" he declared. "Twould keep you eating all day."

We had fried pork besides, and it was wonderfully good. There was "long sweetenin'," a thick sort of molasses. Sometimes we had a kind of maple sugar syrup. Ruth and I baked, and then we sat down to eat, and told over the funny sayings that we could recall. It was very jolly.

The wood was piled up in a sort of lean-to at the side of the house, so I brought in a supply of that. We went out in the street again and a few pedestrians were snowballing each other. A sort of drag with four oxen came along to break the road a little. The town looked like a nest of small white beehives. The snow had blown off the trees, and they stood bare and black against the sky, the finer branches as if traced by a pencil.

I thought I would venture down to the warehouse, but I had not gone far when I met one of the clerks, who reported everything "stiller'n the grave," so I

turned about. We played high low Jack, and then I took up "fox and geese" with Ruth, who couldn't see why I should beat whether I was fox or geese. So to her great delight I let her pen up the poor fox, while her father sat by and smoked his corn cob pipe. Then we shelled a lot of corn, and had a late dinner of fried chicken, at which Mr. Gaynor tried his hand, and it was excellent. I thought I should like to see my father undertake to cook!

Afterward I declared I must go home.

"Oh, why do you?" asked Ruth pleadingly.

"I don't want to wear my welcome out, I want to come again."

"He ain't likely to, is he, Sis? Seems to me his folks might spare one boy when they have so many. Let's toss up a cent to see which one. This is for Homer."

"But I don't want Homer," with pretty petulance.

"Ben or Chris?" He was twirling the penny in his fingers.

"I don't want any boy but Norman."

"And up at Hubbard's they have a mortgage on him. They're trying to teach him how many black beans make five."

Ruth knitted her pretty forehead, then said disdainfully, "As if he didn't know!"

"Well, then, if a pig can eat a bushel of corn in twenty-four hours, how much fat will it put on his bones? This is a matter of great importance to Mr. Gurdon Hubbard. I think he has offered a prize for its solution," and he winked at me.

"A pig couldn't eat it," she said; "he would be a hog."

We both laughed at that.

"Now, young fellow, if you get lost in the snow, don't blame us. We've given you fair warning. 'Tain't likely the house will blow over, seeing as it stood the gale of last night. And, reely, I don't believe it will rain to-night and loosen the underpinning, and there's enough to eat."

In spite of this friendliness I had to tear myself away. But I did get stuck in more than one pile of snow and twice had to fight my way through showers of snowballs.

We never saw clear ground again until March. There was not much business doing and the men gathered in the warm taverns to play cards and swap stories and demolish political candidates, and praise or blame Old Hickory, as the President was termed who had fought his country's battles and served her for nearly eight years in the highest civil capacity. That the country would go to ruin without him was surely predicted; that he had brought her to the verge of ruin the other side claimed.

Every few days I was at the Gaynors', but the Little Girl had given up school. She knit stockings, she sewed and cooked, and we both concluded "The Lady of the Lake" was the loveliest of all lovely stories.

## CHAPTER IV

### A POLITICAL DIFFERENCE

SPRING came at last, though some of us almost longed for the frozen paths when we sank inches deep in the mud. We really were a city now and had a mayor about whom there was still some contention. He had been elected by the small majority. There were many citizens who objected to this step and even then aldermen were looked upon with some suspicion. Where was the money to come from for all the improvements planned? We were going along comfortably, why not let well enough alone?

There were a few sidewalks, but the streets were a terror until they settled a little. The wind helped; there were times when it swept from the prairies and brought the inspiration of the far west, the promise of what could be done shortly, visions of acres of wheat fields that were to be powerful rivals to peltries and furs.

It was absolutely funny sometimes to hear the old men talk who gathered about the wharf or strolled round the warehouse, which was stretching out as well

as running over. We, engaged in the heart of things, had our hands full, and were not likely to "creak in the j'ints" for lack of exercise.

"This 'ere Hubbard 'lows he knows most every thin'," old Hiram Green would say, "'sif the Lord had gin him a kind of far-off sight and called him into council t' settle things. Ther's some freightin', but he didn't diskiver it. Fore he was born things come down from Detroit an' Canady. 'N I've hearn tell that some old Frenchman talked this canal business long time ago. Ther's nothin' new under the sun—Solomon said so—an' 'though I don't hold altogether to Solomon, he had a clear head there. Canal 'l never be built more'n I be made over. Sho now! Country was good enough forty year ago, when you could get your livin' huntin' and fishin' and were livin' neighborly round the block-house."

"Ye ferget the Injun raids," said Abe Byers. "Had to git yer scalp fasten'd on tight every mornin' er cut yer hair short. An' what's livin' wuth if yer ain't improvin'? We want a good clear run to the Mississip—"

"An' be holpen them ther' towns all along the river. Ther's Saint Louis an' Kasky an' Cahooky an' down to Noo Orleens, all them ther' places to the east that are braggin' theirselves up, and we'm goin' to be jest a sort o' isthmus between this and that," balancing his hands one way and the other. "All they want is er right o' way jest to tromp thro' us, to buy things down yender and sell 'em up ther'," nodding his head. "An' who gits the money? I declar' to man I ain't seen a

dollar in so long that I'm 'feared I should drop dead if one kem my way."

"We can't spare you yit, Hi' Green, so we ain't goin' to put that ther' kind o' sacrifice in your way," laughed a good-natured man. "Some day when you're 'bout a hundred they'll be writin' a story of Chicago, an' they'll want to know these 'ere old facts. So you jes' keep 'em safely stored in that brain of yours."

"Can't many remember furder back?" returned the old man, somewhat mollified. "I've hearn granpop tell 'bout that old black fellow that come from some o' the islands down 'bout Gulf o' Mexico with his injun wife when ther' were only a few tradin' cabins, an' ther' land was free for anybody who could give a string o' beads to an Injun."

"Beads won't pass muster now, and I wonder if Pierre Menard didn't feel sick afterward when he found what a good bargain he had unloaded on John Kinzie. The Kinzie tribe will be rich enough presently."

"An' then'll come a flood er a fire and swoop down on everything."

"But the land can't be burned up, and it isn't generally drowned out. Prairie sand can lick up a good deal of water."

I had been half listening to the rambling disputations, and now I turned from my rough desk by the window, which was simply a board with four legs, the two front ones shortened, to Mr. Harris, who stood by his, that was my admiration, though not long after-

ward it was donated to me and he had a much finer one.

"Is it true that Menard was sick of his bargain?" I asked doubtfully.

"I believe he was," Mr. Harris laughed. "I'd like to buy it now for fifty dollars. I don't believe he has done any better. Le Mai, a French trader, bought part of it. But Ouilmette's old house is still standing, stone and logs and plaster."

Michigan Avenue came through it long ago. The Indian wife was quite admired in her day, being tall and straight, and though many white women could not read in those times, she was both shrewd and intelligent.

"I must hunt it up," I said. The little girl was always asking about old places and strange things that we call legends now.

She had wondered about the name. I had inquired of several. It was an old Indian appellation, it was said, and meant "wild onion." Once the great Mississippi was called Chacaqua or Divine River, and was supposed to be under the care of the Thunder god.

"Oh, that is very pretty," she declared, "though we do not believe there is a god for everything, and gods living in various places."

"And another legend is that a great tribe of Tamarroras always called their chiefs by this title 'Checaqua.' "

"That sounds much better than a fiery-smelling vegetable," the lines about her mouth settling in a smile.

"And among the Sacs it was the name of one of their valiant warriors—'He that stands by a tree.'"

"That is really fine. A tall straight Indian standing by a tree! But you have few such splendid trees as we have at home."

That was true enough. The cottonwood flourished, but except for some miles eastward and a long distance to the north there was little fine timber.

The Little Girl and I generally took a walk on Sunday afternoon after the Sunday School ended. Some of the churches had a sermon afterward, the Methodists had theirs in the evening. It was quite nice walking now, and gardens had been put in orderly trim. We hunted up the old Duilmette cabin, now a heap of ruins. The family had dispersed. But Mr. Kinzie had made a very home-like place of the old estate.

"Sometime we will go and ask him to tell us about those old times," I said.

Then there was Dr. Harmon's. That was really fine. A sod fence had been put up around it and he had planted fruit trees and blossoming shrubbery and made a pretty park of it. People often strolled along this south path to the settlement just to view the beauty.

Householders were beginning to cultivate flowers somewhat, and roses were trained over doors and porches. But the Little Girl sighed for the wild flowers of her native State, many of which I knew nothing about. I used to like to hear her talk of the trailing

arbutus and the violets that sprang up among the grass.

She began to go to school again. One afternoon in a week she came over to our house and mother taught her sewing and spinning on the little wheel. She always stayed that night and my brother Ben grew almost as fond of her as I. Dan noticed her now and then, but she was quite too small for him. He was a great favorite with the older girls, and was always asked to their merry makings.

"I do hope he will marry young," said mother. "I'm tired of such a lot of men kind about the house, an' the way they go through stockings! The heels look as if they had been gnawed out by rats."

She had a way of cutting them out, picking up some stitches and knitting in new heels. Ruth thought this a great achievement and wanted to learn how.

"Twould bother your little brains out," said mother with a sort of amused kindness.

"Are my brains very small?" she asked gravely.

"Not smaller than common. You're only a little girl. You'll grow."

"And my brains will grow too? Then I shall know a great deal more. Suppose one didn't have any brains?"

"Then he'd be an idjit. Most people have some, but they're not always put to a good use. Don't you worry, little one. You'll have brains enough."

My father, too, grew fond of her, and I think was pleased to have her ask questions. It always seemed to me the house took on a different aspect when she was there and the boys were more gentle.

Mr. Gaynor had planted his prairie strip with wheat, and was surprised at its astonishing fertility. Even then in a very dry time we practised a sort of irrigation, wide spaces being left where you could drive oxen and a hogshead of water through, letting it run out plentifully.

One of the next things that attracted attention was the raising of pigs. Freighting up the lake and to Buffalo continued about as before. Everything else was at a standstill. Not only was the Presidential election approaching but that for representatives. Stephen A. Douglas and John T. Stuart were competing candidates, and stumped all the sparse towns where there were any voters.

Davis was most complimentary to the new town, and even predicted "that the children of to-day would see a city of fifty thousand inhabitants before they died."

This was received with yells of derision and much shouting of the catch words of the day.

"Town lots! town lots! Shortest route through to China. Will it be duck or drakes?"—in reference to the mud and a slight hit at the men.

Even the women quarrelled about their candidates and for weeks would pass each other by with disdain. Harrison was one of the heroes of the Indian wars—what had Martin Van Buren done to commend him to the patriots of the country?

We sat out on the doorstep one evening. Mr. Gaynor was down to the old Green Tree Tavern, though now it had taken on the more dignified appella-

tion of hotel. Quite a party of Whigs assembled there.

"Norman," the Little Girl began after a long silence, "are you a Whig or a Democrat?"

"I"—I seldom thought of politics except to be amused at the old men "jawin'" about it when they hung around the warehouse and passed opinions on the boats and the truck.

"Yes, you must be one or the other," a little severely.

"But I don't need to until I am twenty-one. I can't vote before that."

"But you can make up your mind."

"Father is a great Jackson man. He would not mind if they put him in again. And he has been a brave soldier. Look at the Indian wars, and that splendid battle of New Orleans! And Dan believes in him. They don't seem to know much about this new man."

"Father is a Whig. I am too," holding up her head proudly. "They are the party that wanted us to be free of England, and they fought for liberty."

"I think there wasn't much difference of opinion then. They were all patriots."

"Then how did they come to differ?"

"Well—" I really did not know, and hesitated.

"The Whigs don't believe in slavery."

"Father doesn't either," I said with a touch of triumph.

"And there are a good many other things. They have a hero for a candidate, while the Democrats have

put up a dandy, who curls his hair and scents his handkerchief."

Many puerile objections were made to the Democratic candidate.

"But he has been in the Senate, and he has been Minister abroad—to England, and *is* a gentleman," I retorted.

"Why do we want a Minister to England?" she returned with a sort of royal indifference. "Tell me that?"

"Countries always send Ministers to each other. There are questions coming up all the time that have to be settled."

"I thought everything was settled in the last war."

"I'll try and find out. I'm paying more attention to business than to politics. And there are two sides to everything, to all great questions."

I thought this was rather a fine way of ending the argument. Then a quick step came patterning down the board walk.

"I declare the good Lord never said a truer thing than that he made man upright and he sought out many inventions. I'm not quite sure the Lord said that either. I haven't read the Bible much latterly, but 'pears to me there's no end of foolish and dishonest inventions when a man talks politics. There's been the greatest lot of idiots up there to-night. If I didn't know more than some of 'em I'd hold my tongue forever. I don't have much to say in this crowd anyhow. 'Twouldn't be quite safe, seein' as I'm a Yankee. I'll do my part when voting comes, and I ain't bragging

about it, either. Votes can talk then. Hillo, young fellow, I believe your folks are on the other side. Well—we'll just pass the time of day till the new man gets in. I've observed then the political pot simmers down wonderfully and you can shake hands across it without getting steam burned. Good-night, I must go shut up my chickens."

I was standing up. "And I must go. Good-night," I said.

She had been sitting on a little bench inside the porch. Now she rose and shook the curls out of her eyes, and responded in the coolest fashion.

I walked away rather dazed. It had not occurred to me that anything could happen between the Little Girl and myself. And why should we be less friends for the sake of two strangers who were really nothing to us?

Father and Dan were coming in the opposite direction and we just met at the path to the doorway.

"Where you been, Norme?" Dan inquired roughly. "With that ther' blasted Whig from Yankeeland, listenin' an' believin' all sorts of lies. See here, you're born of good, staunch, Democratic people, and you'll vote that ticket when you're of age er I'll know the reason why," and he seized me by the ear.

"Dan!" exclaimed father, in a stern voice, loosing his hand, "you've been drinking too much whiskey. I'm ashamed of you! You are taking just the way to make people despise the Democrats. Go to bed and sober up and don't let me see you in this condition again or I'll horsewhip you. Not a word, sir."

Dan went shuffling off, grumbling to himself.

It was no uncommon thing for young men to drink, but the self-respecting class was seldom drunk.

"I wish they'd put a President in for ten years," said father angrily. "I don't know but we will begin to fight each other pretty soon. Let Dan get asleep before you go upstairs, and don't make no note of it in the morning. Dan's a nice lad, generally speaking."

"What is the great difference between the parties?" I inquired.

"Well—I'll be hanged if I know, only 't seems as if men wanted to make it wider all the time. Ther's high and low tariff, and I can't tell which is best. Then ther's slavery, and northern Democrats are pretty much agin that. And money—one paper says one thing, one the other. Both men are good enough fur's I can see. From the bottom of my soul I wish Tippecanoe had been our candidate and a Democrat. Ther's the battle of Miami Rapids and Tippecanoe and Fort Meigs and the 'Thames. He's a good, brave soldier, and he's shown a wise head about Indian affairs and such, and he's been to Congress. I'd like it to be so you could vote for the best fellow. But it's party, party. Thank the Lord you're not old enough to have anything to do with it."

Dan was all right the next morning, but not as boisterous as usual. I went over to the warehouse in a rather troubled frame of mind, with a misgiving that I had been warned on both sides. At our nooning hour I questioned Mr. Harris about the merits of each party.

"You'd better read up history and the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, and see where you come out. I guess there'll always be two parties. Now England's a monarchy and there's two parties there. Sometimes one rules the House of Commons, sometimes the other. But it is a queer thing that reforms start with the weaker party and have a hard time to get a hearing, but they grow and grow, and one is always a check on the other. Yes, you're old enough to begin to understand some of these things, but don't get to be a rabid politician, or you'll be served with walking-papers ;" and he laughed.

Thursday Ruth Gaynor went home direct from school and did not take her sewing lesson.

"I do wonder what has happened to Ruth," mother said when I came home to supper. "Was she well last night? You were there?"

"Yes, she was well. She did not say anything about not coming."

"She'll be in then to-morrow, I reckon."

I had a guilty feeling. What if it spoiled the friendship? I wanted to go down at noon, but pride held me back. She was more than any political feeling—why for her sake I would have been Whig or anything.

I saw her in Sunday School and my heart gave a great bound. Her's was a girls' class across the room. She had on a white frock and a pretty white ruffled sunbonnet. The lesson dragged, the singing lost its melody, but at last came the benediction. The children loitered in little groups outside. I hung back, glad to

talk to a boy about muskrat trapping. Ben went up to her boldly.

"Why didn't you come? We missed you so. Mother couldn't think what got yer."

"Got yer," she returned with a soft little laugh. "What kind of an animal is it?"

Ben's face was scarlet. We were used to the town vernacular, which was a conglomeration of Virginia, Kentucky, trapper and rough boatman's speech, as is often the case with immigrant tongue. She was dainty in all she did and said.

"Oh, you know what I mean," with a protesting boyish gesture. "Come home with us now. Even pop wondered what if you were sick."

"No—I was busy. I was trying to do—some things, and—"

I came around the other side, and gained courage enough to look in the sunbonnet. A tumultuous color hovered over the sweet face, the lips had fluttering curves, the long lashes glittered with the light shining through. I could not have put it in words, but it was one of the remembrances I set along side of my first glance of her. Her hand hung down by her side, a slim little hand, not much sunburned. She kept her fair complexion through wind and sun.

A sudden accession of courage seized me, and I caught it very gently. It was not withdrawn, and my heart went up with a bound, though she was answering Ben.

"You'll come home with us now. Coax her, Norme. Ther' was the grandest chicken potpie for dinner, an'

some left, an' I picked berries for Mr. Kinzie, an' ther's lots of 'em left. They're lickin' good."

"Don't be so economical with your letters, Ben," she returned drolly. "And what is lickin' good?"

"As if any one with half a wit couldn't guess!" returned Ben with a very red face. "Why, when you want to lick off your lips and your fingers, maybe," emphasizing the words he seldom took the trouble to pronounce correctly. "And—the batter left in the cake dish, though Chris always seizes on that now."

She gave a soft ripple of laughter.

"Say—" Bessie Hale pushed in front of us, a big, energetic girl with reddish hair and flaming red cheeks, fanning herself with the skirt of her frock—"ther's goin' to be a frolic out in the woods if they can git things and folks together. Take your dinner an' swings put up, an' race an' run, an' have a good time. I heard Mis' Eastman talkin'. It'll be all planned out by next Sunday an' word give out. All the boys an' girls an' mothers an' gran' ma'ams, and jes' to have fun all day long."

I had heard a whisper of it, and some dissenting voices among the stricter ones as to whether it really was religious. Camp meetings had been held, but a picnic!

All the group of children talked at once and kept going on in a huddle until a few discovered they were in the wrong direction, and then thinned out reluctantly. We kept so close to Ruth that, in a manner, we impelled her to turn up our street, though it looked not much more than a lane.

Mother sat out on the bench in a white sort of short gown with a ruffle about the neck, and a rather coarse white muslin apron, but she looked cool and sweet.

"Oh, Ruth," she exclaimed. "I was afraid you were sick or something. What happened?"

"Did you miss me so much? I am afraid of being a trouble sometimes," she returned with a delicate evasion that I noticed.

"Well, you needn't be; that's some of your father's notions. An' a girl without a mother needs a lot of training, though I must say you do pick up things mighty easy. Oh, boys, don't eat her up jes' if you hadn't had a dinner."

"If you poured some milk over her you could eat her up," said Chris, laughing, "an' some sugar on top of her head."

"Think of the sticky mess in my hair!"

"Oh, but you'd jes' dissolve an' be like—" rolling his eyes about to assist his brain in capturing a comparison—"like a lovely pudding."

"What an idea!" and Ben made a wry face.

"Bring out a stool," said mother. "So M'liss Hatch comes now. Is she good for anything?"

"Yes, I like her ever so much. Aunt Becky grew very cross and she and father had some words, and M'liss likes to show me about things. We have real good times when I'm home from school."

Mother nodded. "She goes home at night?"

"Yes."

"She's got a beau. Pa'son Walker's 'visin' young

people to marry, an' it does smart up the young fellows and keep them out of taverns. An' then they get thinking 'bout a house. Well, you jes' make the most out of M'liss. Is your father's garden turning out much? We've had quite a dry spell."

"Father had it all wet one day. Yes, it is in good order. I hope next year we'll have ever so many berries."

"Chicago won't ever be the garden of the Lord, but Adam an' Eve were turned out of that. Even a thistle wouldn't grow here unless you planted and watered it. What people ever see in this place to come an' settle passes me; an' ther's so many splendid places in the world where things grow fairly wild. I don't wonder people sell out an' go away."

"We're going to be a big port sometime," I announced.

"Sho, that's the men's talk. I've heard men talk before. Where's all the people comin' from, I'd like to know? To hear em brag sometimes you'd think they'd be crossin' the Rocky Mountains 'cause there wasn't any room on this side!"

Mother threw back her head and laughed.

Father was walking up the path and then she declared she must get supper.

"Oh, let me put on the dishes," and Ruth rose, hanging her bonnet carefully on a wooden peg.

Father greeted her cordially and said it had been a full month since he set eyes on her. We all filed indoors, even to the big tiger cat, who kept following Ruth about wistfully. The boys never tormented him

60      A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD CHICAGO

when Ruth was around. They came to the table with cleaner hands, and were much more mannerly, I noticed.

We had a rather jolly meal even if it was Sunday. Afterward we sung some hymns. Mother was very fond of them. Then I walked home with Ruth, though Ben glanced at us large-eyed and wistful.

"Were you very—very much affronted?" I asked, as we were nearing her house.

She seemed considering.

"Because," in a hurried voice, as if I wasn't quite sure I was right—"I've thought it over. I'd just as leave be a Whig as not."

"I shouldn't like you to quarrel with father."

"I'm not going to," I protested earnestly. "And—I want to be good friends."

"Oh, I want us always to be good friends," and the strong sweetness of her tone enraptured me.

She held out her hand, and so we renewed our friendship.

## CHAPTER V

### OF COMMON DAILY THINGS

THE picnic was a grand event, a new sort of entertainment. Some distance to the southeast was the nearest real woods about us. Here and there would be a belt of scrubby pines, good for little besides firewood, or a group of cottonwood trees. But this might justly be called a forest.

Tree planting had aroused no especial interest except the fruit and shade trees in some of the newer residences. A wide clearing was considered a greater protection in the earlier days, as one could sight roving bands of Indians when there was nothing to shelter them.

One would have thought from the discussions that the question of salvation was imperilled by this new form of dissipation. Still the day was carried for it, and some of the old people and most of the provision went out in great ox carts. But the children and young people did not mind walking and were full of spirit and eagerness.

I managed to get off for half a day. Fortunately, the sun went under a cloud now and then, for which I was thankful as I hurried along. And when I came

in sight I stood still a moment with a strange awe, touched by the beauty of the scene. The trees had grown up tall and straight, with no troublesome under-brush. The branches made arches overhead and waved to and fro against the sky, that in most places had a background of faint gray, where darker clouds went drifting over it, or here and there parted to show a rift of blue. I did not know about dryads or wood nymphs in those days, but the figures flitting about gave me a curious unreal sense, as if they could scarcely be human beings. As I came nearer the hum of the voices and the swish of the two swings through a clear path, barely escaping the rugged tree boles or a drooping branch, mingled with the shout of some daring boy who twisted a little and escaped damage.

There had been a fire built, and the uprights with the crotch were standing but the crosspiece had caught the blaze at last and fallen except at one end. A heap of ashes, and charred sticks lying about the edge looked rather melancholy, yet I had seen the like many a time when a band of roving Indians, tired with a long journey, had stopped to cook a meal. There were groups of women together, some of them with babies, and others with their knitting, while they sang the hymns most in vogue at that day. One haunts me through all this lapse of time:

"Am I a soldier of the Cross,  
A follower of the Lamb,  
And shall I blush to own His cause  
Or fear to speak His name?"

and it always suggests those old pioneer missionaries of the Roman Church, who braved all dangers and even death to carry the Gospel to the Indians of the far west.

The children were having a grand time, as I both heard and saw, as I came nearer. They were playing "tag," from point to point, running in and out in a fashion that might have designed a labyrinth, groups sitting on the dry leaves playing mumble peg, a few big boys outside tossing up pennies. Then a girl holding some of her compeers in awe with a ghost story. What an odd, pretty picture it was!

"Oh, Norman, I was afraid you wouldn't come," and a gentle step ran up behind me and caught my arm. I had been peering about for her.

"It is a long walk," I said, "and through the heat."

"Yes, but it is lovely here. Oh, you'll want to sit down and rest."

"That ain't a bit fair, Ruth Gaynor! You'll break up the play."

"Here's Betty March—she'll take my place."

"Oh, yes, you're very fine going off with a boy. Betty don't know how to play."

"If it's telling riddles, I guess I do," rather indignantly, returned Betty.

"But it's guessing them."

"I don't believe that'll puzzle me. I've heard every riddle in Chicago."

"Oh! Oh!" exclaimed a dozen voices in chorus.

We passed on.

"I've had a nice, nice time. Do you want to swing?"

"No," I returned. "Let us find a cool place and sit down."

There were older couples who had achieved such a search and were enjoying it evidently. We plunged a little deeper in the forest.

"Oh, I do love trees so much, a great woods full of them. I wish they grew up all around the town."

I was used to its barrenness, but the beauty and awe of this touched me. A woodpecker ran up and down a tree, surveying it with his beady black eyes and drumming with his bill. Then he paused, turned his head this way and that with a dainty sort of assurance, and suddenly drew a worm out of his snug nest and away he flew. We looked at each other and laughed.

Then a squirrel came scampering along and eyed us suspiciously, but as we did not stir he grew braver. How pretty he was with his bushy tail like a waving plume.

"Oh, I wish I had a bit of bread," cried Ruth, "I have two quite tame ones at home. They beg so prettily that I love to tease them a little, and sometimes I hide the bread to see them hunt for it. They have a home in that old gnarled tree. I found it out one time, and I was afraid the cat would get at them."

"Oh, they would fight the cat if she poked her nose in the hole."

"I hope they would."

Great black ants scurried about this way and that, listening or thinking, it seemed, and occasionally one dragged a burden as big as himself. What queer peo-

ple they were! And, later on, when I came to know more about them, I was filled with a curious admiration.

The soft wind cradled in the green branches murmured its wonderful song, the keynote to so many melodies. It seemed as if we had gone into some enchanted country.

"It is a real forest," she said musingly. "And now one need not be afraid of Indians—" yet she peered about suspiciously.

"But there might be a bear," I said, teasingly.

"A bear!" Her eyes were large with fright and she caught my arm. "Are there really bears—"

"There was one not so very long ago. He made havoc with some pigs and the men turned out for a bear hunt. You see there's no hiding place for them on the prairies, so he ran off into these woods, and they caught him indulging in a comfortable rest. But he had sharp ears and when he found he was pursued he climbed up a tree."

"Oh, that was bright and funny too," laughing.

"But a few shots dislodged him. There was quite an excitement. So we had plenty of bear steak."

"Oh, poor fellow," pityingly.

"And they dressed the hide and gave it to the mayor—a real native robe, not quite a buffalo, though."

"Did any others come?"

"To the funeral? Oh, no. He must have strayed away from his compeers. But there are plenty of wolves."

"Yes, father killed one in the winter that was prowling round."

She leaned her head down on my shoulder. How lovely and peaceful it was. I could have drowsed off, but a voice roused me.

"Ruth, Ruth Gaynor?" with a boyish cadence,

"Oh," opening her eyes, then listening. "That's Ben's voice, isn't it? I promised to walk with him if he would swing the children. Can't we three walk together if you are rested? And I believe I went to sleep. Norman, this wood is like reading beautiful poetry. Oh, do you remember 'The Lady of the Lake'?"

"Ruth Gaynor?"

She gave a pretty call as we rose. Then glancing around, we started toward a little opening and presently heard a crunch on the leafy turf, and discerned a figure going in a direction that would have taken him quite by us, only I called, rather against my will.

"Hello, Norme! When did you come?" He certainly did look disappointed.

"Not long ago," I said. "How splendid it all is!"

"Well, I haven't had much of the splendor, gathering wood and waiting on mother and the women and swinging children. You better go and do some of the work."

"Oh, I just came for pleasure. Remember, I'm in a stuffy warehouse six days in the week."

"Well, ain't I in school an' chopping wood an' bringing water and hoeing weeds and busy enough, I can tell you. I'd like to be down there among the boats.

An' I'm tired. I've been hunting these woods all over for you."

"Several squirrels found us and some birds came and sung to us. Well, let us sit down again. Poor tired Ben!"

Her tone was very sweet with no mockery in it. Ben dropped at the foot of a tree and stretched himself out. What a big boy he was getting to be!

Ruth sat down near him, I on the other side. She delicately pushed the hair from his warm forehead and smiled in his eyes.

"Did you swing all that little crew?" she asked.

"Yes, and twice as many more. I think there are four hundred children on this picnic."

"Half of the children in Chicago. How do you suppose we found enough for them to eat?"

Ben laughed with restored good nature. He was never cross long at a time.

Then they began to relate the funny mishaps, and we did not lack for merriment. Ruth had so many shrewd comparisons. But a group of children found us out.

"They want us all to git together," announced a shock-headed boy. "Mr. Walker's goin' to hev' a meetin'."

They were gathering from near and from far, like Scottish clans. Mothers hustled their families together. Teachers called the scholars in groups and made sure of their number. The baskets were put in the ox van and some cushions to ease up the joints of the old ladies. The remnants of cake were distributed. Then Mr. Walker gave out a hymn. In those days

they were sung over so often, at least the favorites were, that every one knew them by heart. With what a shout it went up there at the edge of the wood. Then a very earnest, thankful prayer for the pleasure of the day, another hymn and the line began to form.

It had been a success to judge from the happy faces and joyous, if tired, voices. Plans were made for a much greater time another year.

The sun was slowly sinking into that wonderful west, and filling the sky with the red gold glow of later summer. The wind breezed up and brought freshness from the great lake, that now and then seemed a molten sea. It stirred every pulse within me.

Presently Ruth's step began to lag. It was growing dusky, and I slipped my arm around her waist, sometimes almost lifting the tired little feet off the ground.

"I've had such a good, good time," she whispered, "but the best was to have you come out. Only—hadn't you better let Ben walk out home with me?"

"Oh, why?" in a tone of decided objection.

"I can't just tell. It is one of the things you feel. He would like it. And you can come in to-morrow for dinner."

That would compensate, but there was no need and I was secretly glad. Mr. Gaynor was there waiting for her with his mule cart, and I think the weary Little Girl was satisfied.

That made a fine break in the everlasting political talk. No one was dreaming of Woman's Suffrage then, but the weaker sex were as strenuous for their favorite as the men. For a little while they forgot

even him and enjoyed spiritual conferences, went to prayer meetings and exchanged experiences, sang hymns about their work.

It seemed to me no one was very clear about the issues. General Garrison was a decided favorite, and even now it seems a matter of wonderment that he did not go in by acclaim. We of the frontier had a stronger regard for him than the Eastern States. They were more cultivated and leaned to the social instead of the military aspect.

There were quarrels and not a few open brawls where pistols were used. Then came the great day of voting, and whiskey and betting were rampant. Chicago had improved a little on the old time, when all letters and news had been brought from Niles, Michigan, by a hardy half-breed, only once a fortnight. Still, the tidings were slow in reaching us. And when it came—Martin Van Buren was elected President of the United States of America. There was great rejoicing among the Democrats. Bonfires were built out on the prairies; they were forbidden in the town.

Indeed, there were a number of laws termed "The Ten Commandments," though some of them were not kept much better than the Mosaic Code. Pigs were not to wander in the streets, men were not to shoot off firearms in the limits, but they did. A stovepipe was not to run through a board partition, as if the city fathers had a premonition that fire would some day work a havoc. There was to be no horse racing in the streets, cards and dice were not to be played in taverns after ten o'clock.

I was much interested to know how Mr. Gaynor would take it. He was by no means a red-hot politician, and though he had decided views he seldom allowed himself to wrangle, but turned off an argument with a joke or some humorous comparison.

"Pity it isn't spring," he said dryly, "for then we could go to work and be sure of a long summer. Now we will be frozen up before you know it. I s'pose your folks are shouting. Well go ahead and have all the hurrahing that you can. It's a long lane that hasn't any turning, and ours has been pretty long. I think I see the turn four years ahead," with a funny twinkle in his left eye.

"I don't see that the President has so much power," I subjoined. I belonged to a debating society now, and we were discussing the affairs of the country. "He *can* veto. Then he has a cabinet to advise him—"

"Well, he doesn't when you come to that, but I observe that he has to shoulder the blame of an unfortunate administration. I wouldn't give a fig for your President, but I do hope Congress will do a little for us. Those Eastern fellows haven't an idea of what this section is going to be. They think they have the whole Atlantic Ocean and trade, and some day we'll have to feed them, keep them from starving. Why, the wheat fields will be the wonder of the world fifty years hence."

He was buying prairie land and seeding it to grain, planting corn and feeding pigs.

I remember his telling mother one time about elec-

tion cake that the Eastern housekeepers made to treat their friends.

"'Twould take a mighty sight to go round here," said mother.

I was amazed to see animosities settle so soon and the men who had threatened to "blow off each other's heads" smoked the pipe of peace around the tavern stove. They were really country taverns, where neighbors came for a friendly gossip, even if they did drink a little whiskey and bet on a game of cards.

I think Mr. Harris was very much interested in furthering my turn for knowledge. He lent me books, he asked me to spend the evenings with him. He had a nice cheerful room with a married sister. He had several volumes of poetry that I borrowed for the Little Girl. Oh, what delight we took in "Percy's Reliques" and some of the old ballad singers!

She grew very slowly, it seemed to me, but then we were such big fellows. Homer went to a carpenter to learn a trade, building being considered a very good business. He was fully as tall as I, but he had no especial taste for books, though he was very quick and ingenious, and full of fun and frolic. There were dances once a fortnight in one of the rooms at the old fort, which was put to various uses, now that the Government had removed the troops. The court was held there, commissioners met to confer and ordain, pay taxes and make complaints. Everybody had a curious sympathetic feeling about it, as if it was in some sort a monument that commemorated the massacre. For some time after the treaty, when the Government

purchased their lands, they distributed goods to the Indians every year. This was on the prairie, on the west side of the river, and we used to make it quite a holiday. The Indians sat around in a circle with the squaws behind them. There was a great pile of goods which the traders and some of the half-breeds began to distribute. At first the row of Indians was quite orderly. Then dissatisfaction would begin and they would rise to their knees, gesticulating and vociferating their mixed gibberish until it seemed they might break out into open war. Then there would be a general scramble, the squaws throwing back articles they did not care for and seizing a lot, that, perhaps, gave them no greater satisfaction.

The day ended by a big fire kindled far enough from the wigwams to escape the danger of conflagration, and the braves would dance around it in a furious manner. Occasionally there were brawls for several days, which culminated in killing a number, and many of the braves would part with their goods to whoever would trade whiskey for them, though this had to be done underhand.

All Chicago was glad and relieved when they were removed to their allotment. Forty ox teams carried the children and the baggage, while the braves and squaws marched leisurely, encamping for the night, and were nearly a month reaching their journey's end.

We were not rid of all the Indians, however. There were some who preferred semi-civilization and whiskey, and not a few half-breeds whose descendants were to be proud of their Indian blood in after years.

There had been mixed marriages, mostly French traders, with Indian wives, and some of these made worthy citizens.

One of the Ottawa chiefs, who had prevented a massacre, after the defeat of Mayor Stillman's force, still remained in a noted place called Shabbona's Grove. Shabbonee kept the respect and friendship of the whites, and was quite a power in quelling disputes among his own nation. While most of the savages in our vicinity were not such as to inspire one with even tolerant sympathy, he was more like the heroes of romance that have been handed down to us from our forefathers. A broad-shouldered, stalwart specimen of his tribe, with a more intelligent face and strength of feature and character than even the average.

Times were very hard and through the winter little could be doing. Plans there were in abundance. Men lingered in the warm shelter of the warehouse and wrangled, of course. I think now it was the foreshadowing of "bulls and bears" that were to dominate the town in the years to come. One party drew roseate pictures of the possibilities of the coming Chicago. We were to be the centre of trade—we were between the east and the west, not only that, but there was Canada and the lakes and the mineral wealth of upper Michigan, the boundless prairies.

And the others sneered at the mud hole and saw dozens of ways in which trade could be diverted. The canal wouldn't ever be finished, the towns along the Mississippi had the start of us and would keep it. Cities would spring up along its banks as if by magic.

There was the gathering trade centring in the mighty gulf, the outlet to France and England, even to the Coast States. What could we produce to compete with them! Would the great cities of the east be generous enough to fall back and beckon us on? Trade looked out for itself first of all.

I used to repeat these arguments to Mr. Gaynor. Sometimes when he wanted to go out of an evening he asked me to drop in so that Ruth would not be left alone. The handmaid, Melissa Hatch, had married and rejoiced in a two-room shanty of her own, but did not disdain coming in for a few hours daily and taking the rough work. They were rather gay and spent their evenings card playing and dancing with their neighbours. Fiddling was a common accomplishment. The dancing was more of the jig, or breakdown, order. Two people would dance to each other, executing all sorts of fancy steps, then turn to the next couple and pair off, and so on until they had gone around the room. If there were not more than four people they seemed to have just as merry a time. Then a little hot whiskey, and to home and to bed. No midnight dissipations for them.

Not that Mr. Gaynor was given to these festivities. He would go over to the Tremont or to Baubein's and listen to the talk, now and then putting in some shrewd remark or a bit of humor, and often caught an idea that he saved up for future consideration, and when the time came used it and made a success of it.

"All this talk doesn't bother me," he would say dryly. "New land's the place for fine crops. To the

eastward you have to pick stones until you feel as if you had a ball and chain to your leg. Land's getting worn out, too. Some day they'll have to come to us for bread. They can't farm and manufacture at the same time, and they're just besotted on building towns and calling in people to work in factories. All well enough for those who like it, but these people will all have to be fed and some one will have to raise the stuff."

He was a typical Yankee for barter. He always had something the neighbors wanted, or could give assistance when it was most needed and take it out in something else, for there really was no money. He raised excellent stock. He looked at a thing, a pig or a pile of boards, or even a bit of land, squinting up one eye, and saw its good points at once. And he managed to keep on the right side of every one.

So I spent half my time at the Gaynors', mother said. Dan was a gay young chap in great demand with the girls, ready for any frolic, and already was the owner of a fine horse that he was very generous with when he had time to drive, and the girls were ready to tear each other half to pieces for the chance.

"I jest wish he'd settle down to one," mother would say complainingly. "There's no look when a fellow's butterflyin' round. He ain't like a bee who has some sense, but jest goes from flower to flower, an' that's the way with Dan. I ain't no ways anxious to have Polly Morrison for a daughter, but I did settle upon it a while ago, an' now it's Betty Hale, but it does seem as if some girl might catch him an' sober him

down. He's smart to earn, but he'll never be fore-handed until some woman gets hold of the purse strings."

Early marriages were quite in vogue, the general trend of new countries.

I did not have to consider the point, for twenty-one was early enough. And I was more interested in books than girls in general. I was not much of a dancer, and I think I was a little afraid of the quick, saucy retorts of the girls. I liked the sledding parties in winter and the skating. We even navigated about on snow shoes, and it was very exhilarating when there was a sharp crust frozen over the snow. On clear moonlight nights there was an indescribable splendor in the far sparkling reaches, whose only limit seemed the boundary of the blue sky, studded with brilliant gems of all colors, it seemed at such times, and changing, as if no settled tint predominated, as the air went waving among them, driving a flock here as if they were birds of mystery, then confronted by some daring immovable fixed star. I used to stand in silent wonder, they were so marvellous.

"And to think that heaven is behind them all," the Little Girl would say with grave eyes.

We were a good deal troubled with wolves and now and then there was a regular hunt. Dan was always delighted with such adventures. Some more valuable animals were captured as well.

But spring came on a main, and curiously enough, business seemed stirring up in spite of hard times and money disturbances. The people of Chicago were

workers. They began to look after the streets a little, to straighten the houses that had been set in every fashion, and though there did not seem much of promise to call them thither, emmigrants were arriving nearly every day in all sorts of vehicles, and of several nationalities. The French had quite a little settlement to themselves, Germans began to look for outlying farms, some had already bought Government land. There were still Indian wigwams, in which squaws labored and pappooses abounded.

And though it was not a highly diversified country, and many things were left for the hand of man to accomplish, still it took on a certain beauty. The broad belt of timber to the west stood up sentinel like, to the south there were various rises of ground; there were the broad prairies and the magnificent lake, beginning to be dotted with vessels of all the rather primitive kinds. The building of the Clarissa had been considered a great achievement, and was being followed by others.

Gardens came out in summer bravery. Many of them were an acre or two in extent. Apples and plums grew readily, indeed it seemed as if plums were indigenous to the soil. Smaller fruits were cultivated, and all those not likely to be killed with the hard cold winters.

Here and there you saw prairie schooners, as they were called, with a double team of oxen lumbering along with a load of logs from some more favorable point for the saw mill. Wheat fields waved in the sunshine, making billows like the sea. Cornfields green

and strong shot up like armies. Rye and oats—every-thing grew as if by magic. Doors were wide open, and women sat spinning, or some one ran to and fro with nimble feet at the big wheel.

In another house was a loom, the warping bars hung with skeins of colored yarns, and the ceiling of the homely interior still ornamented with the remnants of winter provender, where there had been abundant stor-ing. Children played around outside, older ones went to and from school, raced about in childish games, handed down from generation to generation. A neighbor woman in a faded blue gown and sunbonnet stopped to gossip awhile at some one's door as to who was "keepin' stiddy comp'ny," who had been buying a cow or putting up a shanty, or "dyein' of ther' yarn." Less than three quarters of a century ago they had dreams of greatness then, but they would have fainted to see this day.

The Little Girl had learned to spin and had a wheel, She had learned many other things as well, and some of the older people thought she was "fittin' to keep house athought any help." But M'liss was glad to come in daily, though now she brought a small bundle, rolled in an old shawl, which she generally deposited on a bench and stood a chair-back against it.

"I jest useter think it was orful to strap them little Injun babies on a board an' hang 'em to a tree, but I dunno. They want ter be made straight, an' fraish air is good fer 'em. I s'pose people'd think I was orful unhuman to do it, but lawsy a' massy me, what does

anything like that want but jest to lay still an' grow till it gets some sense."

Ruth was not enchanted with the baby, though she berated herself for a kind of hard-heartedness. It had a funny little face screwed up to a point in the centre, with a sloping forehead and no chin to speak of, and it was a curious red brown.

" 'Tain't no great beauty," M'liss admitted. "But I never see one that was. Ther's a big world fer 'em to grow good lookin' in if they hev the gift, an' if they hevn't, why, they hevn't, that's all. I can't say I was eszatly hankerin' fer it, but it's here, an' sent fer some wise perpose, mebbe."

M'liss was very glad of the good meal and the chunk of pork or loaf of bread she earned. The Little Girl only went to school for half a day now, she was learning so many useful things at home to make her her father's housekeeper. He was always very tender to her I noticed, and thought her very smart.

Sometimes when we sat on the doorstep of an evening he would join the talk. His father and grandfather had been Revolutionary patriots. He had been to Boston and sailed from there to New York and back, and knew a good deal about the geography of the Eastern States. I brought out my store of knowledge, gleaned from traders who stopped at the warehouse. Some of the stories seemed too marvellous for belief, and now they are commonplace history.

The only thing Ruth was really slow about was figures. Mr. Gaynor was very quick and could not seem to understand it.

"You must learn," he would say. "I may get old and lose my eyesight, then you'll have to do my clerking."

So we used to labor with her. She knew her tables, children learned them perfectly in those days, but there was some little knack of applying them in which she seemed deficient. And when we were alone she would say:

"Oh, don't bother. Let us read. When I am grown up it will all come easy enough," and her winsome smile always persuaded me.

Mr. Harris had loaned me "Pope's Illiad," recommended it to me, in fact. When I had gone about half through I was so enchanted that I brought it to her, and turned back that we might share it together. How wonderful it seemed to us! We took it in as every word true. These were the people who lived long before America was discovered, long before William the Norman crossed over to Britain.

"But I do wonder if men must always fight," she said with a sigh.

We were at peace then except for an occasional Indian skirmish, but these glowing descriptions did stir my blood.

Then there was an old copy of the "Morte'd Arthur" that we revelled in. And there were outside enjoyments, rambles about on Sunday afternoons that we did not keep as strictly as the people to the eastward. Mr. Gaynor was full of funny stories about the old blue laws, as they were called, of having a hen put to

death because she laid an egg on Sunday. But one that amused us very much was the old couplet:

"The deacon, he whipped the barrel of beer  
Because it worked on Sunday."

There was some splendid birch and sassafras beer made in many families, and though there was a good deal of whiskey used, numbers of the best men frowned on habitual drinking.

One of the great amusements on Saturday afternoon was horse racing. This had to be outside the town. It created immense enthusiasm. Several of the young Indians owned fine horses and were proud enough of them. Dan entered his beautiful Chita, and after some training and several attempts she won a race, to his great delight. We had gone out, and I must say my inmost heart was stirred at the sight, but I had not thought the laurel wreath would descend to us. It was a perfect ovation. And that night he came home much the worse for drinking, and he and father had quite a desperate quarrel.

"I should like to shoot the mare!" declared father.

"He'd move heaven and earth to get another," and mother put her arm over father's shoulder. "Dan is a pretty good boy in the main, and I'm hoping he will get a wife some day to steady him."

"Polly Morrison!" flung out father scornfully.

"No," I hope it won't be Polly Morrison."

Polly was a slim, lithe slip of a girl that no two people ever agreed about. Her skin was of lily fair-

ness no matter what she did. Her eyes were large, and although glorious does not seem the proper adjective, that is what they were. Brown, with golden lights that could flash and laugh and turn so tender, you were sure they were in tears. She had a rather wide mouth, full of curves and dimples. The one thing that laid her open to criticism was her hair. Somehow red hair was not in high favor, and though her admirers quarrelled about it, red it surely was, the deep rich sort of mahogany red, with a gloss as if the sun shone upon it. There were great waves from the white parting to the coil which covered the back of her head. Occasionally she shook it down, and it was a glistening cloud about her, looking like something alive. She was a harum-scarum sort of a girl, could row equal to a man, ride bareback, run races, dance like a creature bewitched, go to church on Sunday and look as demure as a saint.

That summer Chicago was all astir. It didn't matter to anybody whether Martin Van Buren was President or not. There were processions of grain coming in, ox loads, precursors of trains that no one dreamed of then, bringing it in sheets and blankets, begged of the housewives when bags were filled, and there was the crude elevator, the grain hoisted by hand with block and tackle, and dumped into the hold of the big Osceola. Twenty-nine hundred bushels to be sent to Black Rock, New York State, the beginning of the mighty contribution that was to enrich not only the city, but the east as well, and in future times to stand between the world and starvation.

Crowds went to see it. How proud everybody was. John Gaynor rubbed his hands in glee.

"What did I tell you!" he kept saying in triumph. "This will sometime be the great city of the world, and those blasted fools at Washington can't see that we need anything, not even to have the canal finished. Well, we will surprise them yet."

He was not much given to swearing, though profanity seemed rather in the air. The good parsons preached against it, and some of the best men rarely used an oath.

For days nothing was talked of but the exploit. The Osceola had gone off with the cheers of the crowd. But when the jubilation subsided a little, new plans were made for the elevator to use horsepower instead of hand, and to enlarge its capacity.

Crops of all kinds had been good. The yield of corn was tremendous. Pigs were in demand; there was plenty to fatten them. We were almost as likely to have a boom in these products as there had been in real estate a few years before.

Mr. Dole had been slaughtering and packing cattle of both kinds down on Dearborn and South Water streets. The small log building where he first lived stood three doors east of the warehouse, but now he had built a more commodious dwelling. Mr. Thompson was in his new office and still busy surveying and mapping out lots, and making trades that, as father said, kept the log rolling without any money. Mr. Thomas Church had enlarged his store, and the women

had a gala time going to see the pretty things every few months when a new stock came in.

The older inhabitants still kept to weaving linsey woolsey and common grades of woollen, as well as some of the coarser cotton cloths. Spinning and knitting was much in vogue, but the girls beginning to grow up rather protested against the labor. And the goods coming from the States and abroad were so pretty and tempting. So butter and eggs were bartered off, strong sacking stuff, pork and woollen stockings for the boatmen and the voyagers.

Mr. Carpenter was building a fine house over on the west side and setting out choice fruits that stirred others up to emulation. Then we had a daily paper, the *American* having started a precarious venture that most men predicted would be a failure, and "where could any one find news enough to fill up a daily paper?" was on the tongues of the objectors. It might not have been the highest intellectual pabulum, but we were not educated up to that mark, and somehow we took to the effort most cordially and wondered how we could have done without it.

"You can't wash out a hankercheer now an' hang it on a bush, a'thought everybody knowin' it," grumbled Grandmother Green, "an' I kin hear all the news I want on prayer-meetin' night. I hain't got no money to go foolin' round stores an' other people wouldn't 'nother if they paid ther' just debts."

## CHAPTER VI

### THEN THE UNCOMMON

THAT autumn a theatre was opened on the west side of Dearborn Street, over a general store, a plain, wooden building. The second floor was seated and a stage erected with rather crude paraphernalia. It was called the Rialto. A Mr. McKenzie was manager and stage director, and some very good plays were given with William Warren, Mrs. Ingersol and Mr. Jefferson, with little Joe in his first attempts. They had very fair audiences, and it was a step above the card playing. There were also some lectures given, and several educational plans brought to the fore. If they were to be a great city they must rouse themselves on every side.

I went to the theatre with Ruth and Mr. Gaynor. He, it seems, had seen several plays. Ruth was curiously interested.

"Why, it is like what people say and do all the time," she said with a rather puzzled air. "Not as funny as some of the stories they tell. And somehow, you seem to lose the thread. You want to know what

they did in between. I believe I'd rather read the whole story."

I began to be curious about Shakespeare's plays, and talked them over with Mr. Harris.

"Oh, if you want to read them aloud to a little girl, I will let you have Charles and Mary Lamb's stories," he said. "You will enjoy them better."

And enjoy them we surely did.

But one night we had a great alarm. There had been occasional fires, still so many of the houses being small and detached no great harm had been done. But the Tremont Hotel took fire, and though strenuous efforts were made to extinguish it the men soon found their labor was in vain. Then the near-by houses began to go and terror filled everybody. Those at a distance started to carry out their choice belongings that they had worked so hard to accumulate. Near-by houses were demolished in the hope of staying the flames.

We were safe enough, but I had some fear for the Gaynors, and ran over as fast as I could. The streets were packed with people pushing, shouting and swearing, and if noise could have deadened the flames the brilliant sheets and spires would soon have turned to a dull smoke. I pushed my way along, once encountering Dan, who struck out at me, which I dodged.

"You start home, youngster, 'fore you git hurt," he cried, but the next moment I was lost in the crowd.

I could not think the Gaynors were in any real danger, and they were not. M'liss had run up with her

baby in her arms, while her husband had gone to the fire, and they were standing in the small front yard.

"I declare to man! How did you get over here?" ejaculated John Gaynor. "Now that you are here I'll just take a stroll over and see the damage. Splendid sight, if it wasn't burning up what 'twill be hard to get together again. You can't make much out of ashes, though it's mighty good for growing corn."

Ruth clung to me. We talked this night over years afterward, when we were fleeing from an awesome and terrible army of flames that seemed bent upon our very lives.

"Will there be any one burned up?" she asked tremulously. "If it wasn't houses, it would be magnificent."

"Oh, no," reassuringly. Then I felt I was not sure. I had not thought of the sacrifice of human lives.

Out of the black smoke would shoot up a great spire of flame, showering sparks like an immense Roman candle. We knew little about fireworks then, but I never see one going to pieces without recalling this scene. Fortunately there was not much wind or all Chicago would have gone then.

You could hear the roar and the crackle and it was really frightful. She began to cry from overwrought nerves, and I tried to soothe her. M'liss was full of queer comments at which I had to laugh in the midst of my anxiety. Then the baby woke and set up a howl.

It was after midnight when Mr. Gaynor returned. The danger of the flames spreading had been conquered, the brilliant blaze subdued from lack of further

food on which to vent its ravenous appetite. It was now a thick black smoke that penetrated everywhere.

"Well, that's something of a fire for a town like this," declared Mr. Gaynor. "Awfully unlucky, as if times were not bad enough without all this loss. It will take years for the town to get over it. There's eighteen or twenty houses burned besides the hotel."

We knew most of the owners, and certainly they were deserving of sympathy. I stayed all night and the next morning made one of the crowd gathered at the ruins. Seventeen buildings had been burned and there lay a long tract of cinders and ashes. The condolence was sincere and offers of assistance hearty. The hotel would be rebuilt as soon as possible. The courage evidenced the indomitable pluck that was to be tested more than once and show an undaunted front.

The ruins would be cleared away at once. More stringent rules about buildings and fires were discussed. There was a finer public spirit in all this. We were to be a town of note presently. The canal came up again for a more earnest share of attention. Streets must be improved, wharfage extended, better docks built—they were very crude indeed.

But winter settled in and most of the improvements had to stop. There was no end of trouble about money matters. The State banks suspended payment. One could never tell just what the money of any other State would be worth. The new President had brought no especial prosperity such as his party had predicted, and some of his warmest adherents denounced him—as if he alone shaped the policy of the Government.

The Little Girl and I did not meddle our heads about any of these things. I could see that John Gaynor, in a certain way, was getting to have quite a place in Chicago affairs as far as advice went. In other matters he kept closely to his own business. He picked up pieces of property, giving oftentimes labor, or grain, or pork in exchange. Game was plentiful if you went far enough for it. Often a party of men would go out for a three or four days' hunt and come home laden with spoils. Still, there was a demand for domestic poultry and eggs, and Gaynor's stock of all kinds was considered first class.

He was out quite often in the evening, and I fell into the habit of stopping as I came from work.

"Just take a bite with us, Norman," he would say. "I'm going to Green Tree or down to Baubein's, and I'll be home by nine. But I can't leave Ruth alone; don't know but I shall have to hire you for steady company," with a laugh.

Sometimes I ran off home after that, at others remained all night. Dan was very gay and seldom in before eleven. But as the Little Girl was too young for dances or merrymakings we amused ourselves. M'liss occasionally added to our fun by her droll experiences and views on everything, in an uncouth dialect. Her granny, now near a hundred, knew all about the first people who came to Chicago, and M'liss sometimes was very interesting, though I used to think granny must have drawn on her imagination for some of the tales, but they so captured Ruth's romantic side that I let them pass.

At other times we read and really studied about the different States. The Mississippi, with DeSota, La Salle and Tonti, was a mine of treasure to her. Later New Orleans, with its changes of government, Napoleon's marvellous history and the purchase of the West, was a great source of interest to us both. Mr. Harris was my mentor. Between getting and giving I added much to my incomplete boyish education.

But it was not all history. Every volume of poems I met with I borrowed, and we read the old ones over. I think we both knew pages of "The Lady of the Lake," our first love.

One evening an odd incident happened to me that in the beginning was rather a source of annoyance. I was to go to Mr. Harris's and had a list of inquiries in my mind to talk over. At the side of the cheerful fire in the arm-chair with the high cushioned back sat a gentleman of distinguished appearance that I had caught sight of in the warehouse, a tall man with a rather spare but not thin figure, a fine face that, no doubt, had been handsome in youth. The forehead was high, but rather narrow, the hair, that now had only a few dark threads in it, but a certain silvery gloss, an aquiline nose, and the beard, snowy-white, trimmed in the Van Dyck fashion. The eyes held me. They were large and dark, but with a kind of winning softness. The eyebrows were still dark and so were the long lashes.

"This is Mr. LeMoyne, Norman, and this," turning to the gentleman, "is the young friend I was telling you of."

He did not rise, but extended his hand with such a grace that I felt self-condemned for my discourteous thought.

"We have been talking about you," he began, and there was something in his voice that completed his sudden ascendancy over me. "Mr. Harris was saying you were much interested in New Orleans, and that you had never seen any of our larger cities. I have been in that quaint southern French town for some months."

I knew I smiled with pleasure. There was such a charm in his manner. But I felt tongue-tied, abashed.

"You cannot have much of an idea of it from this place, except as Mr. Harris tells me that you are almost in a sea of mud except when you are frozen up. They have a great deal of it in the way of inundations, and part of the city lies very low. But there is no real winter and everything is ablaze with roses. Such luxuriant trees, indeed all kinds of vegetation. It is really a French city, much more so than St. Louis. The States seem to have taken in almost every nation and I wonder how they will assimilate them."

"I should like to see the year 1900," laughed Mr. Harris. "We are not half through a wonderful century. It is not sixty years yet since we achieved our independence, a few poor struggling colonies, and already we are stretching beyond the Mississippi."

"What madness took possession of France I can never understand, except that she set out to rule men's religious consciences while she herself plunged into the depths of depravity. The Huguenots would have

been a crown of enlightenment to her, and she martyred them, cast them out, and then slowly followed the loss of all this great empire, for which she had paid so much in the lives of her finest and bravest men. From New Orleans to Montreal!"

"Have you been to Canada also?" I ventured to inquire.

"To Canada, to the cities on the Atlantic, to England, France, Holland, indeed as far as Moscow, Constantinople and the Mediterranean," and the smile he gave me completed his conquest.

Then we went back to New Orleans with its French, Spanish and Creoles living in harmony, its odd, narrow streets, its great outlying estates, its sugar plantations, its bloom and beauty until my heart was afire with a desire to see it. And its antithesis was Montreal, Quebec.

It seemed to me when the clock struck nine there had never been so short an hour and a half. I knew I must go, but it was as if some curious power held me back, pervaded every pulse. I could believe in enchantment.

"I hope you have had a pleasant evening," said Mr. Harris at the door, "and that it may lead to something more advantageous."

"I can't express it," I returned bunglingly. "I never heard any one talk so delightfully before, and to think what Mr. Le Moyne must know!"

He laughed softly.

We were very busy the next day with some accounts, and said nothing about the evening until lunch time. I had brought mine. Then I heard that Mr. Le Moyne

was one of the partners in a large fur-trading company and also in the new copper mining in Northern Michigan, that was being rapidly developed. In his youth he had fled from France to Canada in the time of the Huguenot persecution, and had become deeply interested in business later on. I was very enthusiastic.

"Yes, I was glad to have you see him. Such men are worth knowing."

It seemed quite absurd that I should ever have the opportunity of knowing much about him. Men of his stamp were not frequent visitors in our provincial town.

If I had been enraptured myself I have no word to describe Ruth's delight. After all, we were very simple children, though our reading had broadened our minds, and I had found before this that Mr. Gaynor, indifferent as he seemed to what is called culture, was a very well-informed man on general topics and shrewd in his observations. I did not know then that education was much more widely diffused at the East.

The outcome of this was a proposal I could not have imagined. Mr. Le Moyne dropped in the rough little office several times and we had a few suggestive talks about business which seemed rather for Mr. Harris than for me. One day my father was called into council, which amazed me, for when he went out he gave me such a mysterious look.

"We'll knock off now," said Mr. Harris. "There's nothing to suffer, and I have a plan to lay before you, an opportunity that doesn't happen more than once in

a lifetime, and I hope you will take it. Your father has given his consent."

The offer was from Mr. Le Moyne, who wanted what would be called a private secretary nowadays, perhaps a little more. With his perfect health he had been seized with a mysterious eye trouble, a dimness of vision that nothing could cure, but that rest and carefulness would assist in putting off the evil day, and that he might never be totally blind. He wanted a young intelligent person who would be pleased to travel, who would be companionable, who could read to him, write his private letters, who was trusty, honest and reliable, and who had the enthusiasms of youth. He would give me a good salary and put me in the way of making a fortune if I stayed with him. But we would make our bargain first for two years.

I was absolutely speechless from surprise. My brain was in a whirl. I was glad to have Mr. Harris go on pointing out the advantages, though I am afraid I could not have told one of them afterward.

"Well?" presently, in an inquiring tone.

"I am so confused," I began. "Of course it is a splendid chance, only I had never thought of going away—"

"Two years soon passes, and you may come back before that. Mr. Le Moyne is a delightful gentleman. If I was young I'd jump at the chance. Yes, I suppose it is a surprise," with a little heartsome laugh. "But you'll take it. You see it isn't even as if your parents had no other sons. There's enough of you boys to settle a town. One won't be missed."

Ah, but I knew one who would miss me.

I went home in a dream. Father had been telling mother and Homer, who had wrenched his ankle skating. The two boys were out snowballing.

"Well, that's equal to a lottery prize!" declared father. "Norme, some of your fine notions stand you in good stead. I've sometimes thought with your mother that you should have been a girl, but now we see the sense of them. This Mr. Le Moyne wouldn't look at a great rough lout. Well, if he'd laid a hundred dollars in gold in my hand I really think I couldn't be gladder."

"It's wonderful," said mother in a softened tone. "I've jawed an' scolded at the way you boys run through stockings an' wear out trousers, but I shall be awful sorry to have you go away, only this is a chance out of a thousand. But you c'n write, an' two years isn't long."

"Well, I wish it had been me!"

"You!" cried mother with disdain.

"Homer's a smart lad in his way. I look for him to build up half Chicago before he dies. They're all good lads, if Dan is a bit wild."

We talked all the evening. Of course, there was no refusing. The next morning Mr. Le Moyne came in, and I signed an agreement to stay with him the two years.

"That's to tide you over the homesickness at first. I wouldn't give much for a lad who wasn't a little touched by parting with his own folks. But we will have some nice times together, and you'll

see a good deal of the world. I hope you'll like me."

Like him! If it hadn't been for the Little Girl I could have knelt at his feet for very joy and gone all over the world with him.

I went to supper at the Gaynors'. Ruth had been making Johnny cake, and it was delicious. She had some funny sayings of M'liss' to repeat, and we laughed, of course.

"Now that you're here I'll go down to Baubein's and smoke an hour," Mr. Gaynor exclaimed, rising from the table.

"Don't go!" I blurted out, and I believe I was almost crying. "I have—something to tell you."

"Nothing bad, I hope!" He studied me curiously.

I don't know how I told the story. It was all in a jumble. He looked as if he didn't half believe me.

"Not that tall, white-bearded Frenchman, who looks as if he had just come from a King's Cabinet. Well, I swan! Norman Hayne, you're born for luck. Give us your hand."

He wrung it almost off.

"I'll sit down and hear the story over again. That Frenchman is said to be worth a mint of money, and you're on the right side. You just keep there, with care."

He made various comments as I went over the happenings. Then he seized his beaver cap.

"You don't mind if I tell it?" laughing. "I know just how a woman feels when she's dying to retail a bit of gossip. But this is uncommon."

"No," I replied, "I expect father's spreading it abroad."

"So would I if I had such a boy." Then he went out and slammed the door.

We stood and looked at each other. Ruth's eyes filled with tears that slowly rolled down her cheeks.

"Oh, Ruth, don't! don't!" I cried, and my arms were around her. Her face was buried on my breast.

"Oh, how can I let you go!" The tender accent pierced me to the heart.

It is curious what people do in times of great emotion or anguish. She released herself presently, wiped her eyes, and said, "We must clear the table. I am glad you liked the Johnny cake."

"It was delicious, only I was so full of the—" the bad news, I was about to say, but paused.

"Of course, it is splendid, and you will see so much of the world. There are so many beautiful places that we have read about. And it will be—Norman, you will be a gentleman. But you won't—" her voice trembled and broke.

"If you mean that I will not forget, you may be sure of that, and I shall never outgrow anything, not even dear old Chicago, even if other cities were paved with gold," I replied emphatically.

"Nothing is but the New Jerusalem," she said solemnly. "Whatever happens, we shall be together there."

"Nothing will happen. I shall come back in two years. Business may bring me back before that."

We washed the dishes and put them away. Then I stirred the fire and we sat down side by side. How often we had done it—two years—how long it looked!

I loved her very much. More than ever I wished she was my sister and that mother could watch over her. She would gladly, I knew. A little girl, barely twelve years old and not large for her age. Once or twice a thought crossed my mind, but when I looked at her it seemed sacrilege, like pulling the bud open before it was ready to unfold. She was so sweet and innocent.

I told her all I knew about Mr. Le Moyne, and how he had really charmed me. "I should like to bring him to see you," I said.

"Oh, I should be so glad!"

Mr. Gaynor came home, but he had not recovered from the surprise. I loitered awhile, but I knew my mother would be waiting for me.

I was quite a hero, I found. The older men congratulated me, the boys envied me. Mr. Le Moyne was very gracious and affable. He came and had a long talk with mother and she was charmed with him. He went to the Gaynors' with me and pronounced Mr. Gaynor shrewd and intelligent. Ruth, he thought sweet and pretty, but she was very shy.

Oh, how quickly the time sped by. A winter journey was no light thing in those days, but Mr. Le Moyne was well prepared and a seasoned traveller.

The good-bys and the good wishes were enough to start one on a prosperous journey. And when I

glanced back I saw my mother had the Little Girl by the hand. They were the two dearest souls on the earth to me. How would she look when I met her again? Oh, what long, long years! Even then I could have turned back gladly.

## CHAPTER VII

### FROM THE LITTLE GIRL'S SIDE

I WAS so lonely after Norman went away. I suppose it had been almost like having a brother. Mrs. Hayne and I went to see him start, and there was quite a crowd of friends. The sun was shining as if it was a May day, with that curious quiver in the air, and it was truly pleasant. Of course, pinning our faith to the Almanac, we could safely have said winter had come to an end, but in Chicago March did not mean spring.

What a handsome face that Mr. Le Moyne had, and his voice was so sweet as he said, "Never fear, he will come back safe. You may see us both before you expect it."

I suppose that was meant for Norman's mother, but he gave me the smile as well.

"You had better come home with me," she said, still holding my hand.

"Oh, no, I can't," I replied. "I am mending some bags for father. I couldn't finish them yesterday."

"These hands are too little to sew rough bags."

"M'liss is going to help me."

"Oh, then, I suppose I must let you go. Come over to supper, won't you?"

"I will see," but I felt my cheeks burn, for I really did not mean to, much as I loved her. I did not want to hear them talk about Norman and rejoice at his good fortune. It was good, I know, but I was not quite ready to be glad over it. I wanted a little time to get my mind steady.

M'liss had the bags strewn around and the baby in the midst of them. He really was growing better looking, his chin was filling out and his forehead began to be a little bump that broke the smooth descent from the top of his head. But it seemed as if his mouth grew wider.

"D'yr know what I've jest gone an' done? Yer pop'll scold like fire 'n' tow, but that ther' bag jest wasn't any bag at all but holes. 'N' I've jest took it to mend t'others. Two patches an' that ther' little smitch was all I could git out of it. Holes ginerally speaking haven't much savin' grace to 'em. You jest can't convert 'em to anything."

I looked rather askance. Bags were bags in those days.

"What yer pop wants is to git a piece o' baggin'. Marty Pettingil's weavin' of it. For a good strong heft o' corn er grain 'll punch new holes in 'em quicker'n wink. En ther's somethin' 'bout puttin' new wine in old bottles, though I don't see jest why if you leave stoppers out. Any fool oughter know enough fer that. En patchin' old bags is like darnin' old stockin's, tears out jest above en below an' all round.

I put a patch on 'em now. That's an idee of my own en saves a lot o' stitches. Them bags is mended."

I shook out two and laid them by. Then I brought out a wolf rug and put the baby on that. He crowed a little and then returned to his former employment of gnawing his fist. "The baby is real good," I said. "Does he ever cry?"

"Oh, Lord yes! But he's findin' out that it don't amount to much an' times whenst he's cross en don't have stomach ache I hit him a good slap, en I give him a piece o' pork rind to chaw on. It's good as a dose o' ile."

There was not much science or sanitary knowledge in those days. Yet children thrived and grew.

I hunted up my work-box. Homer had made it, though it was Norman's gift. We had pasted some bits of pretty paper in most of the compartments.

"Now you jest g'long," said M'liss, brandishing her formidable needle. "Tain't enny kind o' work for you, an Norme he stopped t'other night an' said—'You jest do the hard things and chores, M'liss, to save her. She ain't strong enough to tackle 'em, an' I'll make it all straight with you when I kem back.'"

"It was so good in him to think of that!"

"'N' if you want to work go out en hunt aiggs. Caton's folks sent over. Two dozen ef you've got 'em to spare."

I was very glad to do that. It was a mystery to our neighbors how father could make hens lay in cold weather. They had a good tight house for the night,

and he seldom let them out until noon. We threw the corn in on the ear, and it was quite fun to see them tumble over each other to pick it off.

I only found fourteen, but I knew there would be more by noon. How pretty and white they were, almost like living things.

I took up my knitting. Men's stockings came up over the knees then, and it was a good long stretch to knit the legs. M'liss had pared a great panful of potatoes, so I filled up the big kettle with water and swung it over the blaze.

"Now ef you kin find a crust o' bread—I guess that youngun's hungry, en I don't want no growlin'."

"Why, he can't eat bread with no teeth!"

"Well, he kin gnaw it, en if he thinks he's gittin' some it'll be all the same."

"It wouldn't be for a hungry man," and I smiled.

"Land no! En if he takes after his father the Lord help us! Jed Hatch kin eat mor'n any two men I know."

The bags were mended and piled up in the out kitchen. M'liss cooked the potatoes and fried the pork while I laid the table. The baby rolled over asleep with his crust still in his hand and his mouth. Father came in and gave my cheek a soft pinch.

"I was afraid you had been crying your eyes out," he said. "Brave little girl, we'll miss him bad enough, but it's such a fine chance and there's such a lot of Hayne boys. Guess he's the smartest of the lot though, where books are concerned, but it isn't everybody that's wantin' book learning. Why, it's said that

fine old fellow Mr. Le Moyne's worth thousands and thousands!"

"I've been kinder respectin' yer feelin's," said M'liss in a low tone "en thought I wouldn't say anythin' about Norme goin' away, seein' as ye was sick friends. Yer'll miss him jest orful, he was here so much."

I winked hard to keep the tears back.

"Harris says they won't find another boy like him in a hurry. I don't know what's got into boys nowadays, they ain't worth their salt. Seem to think they were put into the world jest to loaf round. That horse-racing will be the ruin of them. I'd have it stopped if I was boss."

I didn't so much mind the talk of boys in general. Father ate a good hearty dinner and went off to work, pleased to find the bags mended. M'liss ate her dinner, fed her baby, washed the dishes and took some potatoes home with her, though she "lowed she'd stay and company me if she hadn't promised to rub out Mis' Crane's wash, seein' she had rheumatiz' and wasn't strong."

It was a lonely afternoon, for I was thinking of the evenings in all the two years to come. If I had a sister! There were no girls near by. Over the other side of the river there were so many of them and they were always having such good times.

It was a long, long afternoon. I fed the chickens and shut them up and then cooked the supper. We were hardly through when there was a cheery whistle in the outer kitchen and Ben Hayne came in.

"Mother sent me over to say she was coming this afternoon only Mis' Carpenter an' Mis' Wooley come a-visiting. They are there yet. I was kep' in school."

"Then you haven't had any supper. Come and have a bite, though I expect you have lots of good things at home."

People in those days made a great spread for company.

"Yes, and stay a bit with Ruth while I go out and smoke a pipe," said father.

Ben nodded and sat down at the table.

"Ruth," he began, when he had demolished a big slice of bread, "I feel somehow as if there had been a funreal. I s'pose it is 'cause we know Norme isn't coming back in ever so long. But say, won't he have just the beatinest time! We were looking up the places on the map. Norme was such a good fellow. I'm going to try to get in a store next year. Father says I may."

"That will be a nice thing."

"And over here, too. Then I can drop in just as Norme used to. Mother doesn't see what you're going to do alone. She'll be over to-morrow. Wouldn't it be a great scheme for you to move?"

"Oh, father couldn't move the ground and everything," I returned.

"No, I s'pose not." Then he laughed. "They're going to move some ground though come summer to fill up the slough. Dear me, I wish we had some mountains!"

I could recall some mountains in the old State we had come from, yet, somehow, I had begun to love the long stretch of prairie.

"Tell me what you are learning at school," I said, as I was putting away the supper things.

He was in full swing when there was a rap at the door. To my great surprise it was Mr. Abner Harris. He greeted Ben very cordially, and they began to talk about Norman at once, and what a splendid prospect he had before him.

"He is worthy of it, too," said Mr. Harris, "or I could not have recommended him. I am about as sorry to part with him as any one. I don't know when we will find such another painstaking fellow. You will miss him about reading, won't you?" turning to me, "and I came over to say that if you'd like to borrow any of the books I have, you'd be welcome to them. My sister is going to call on you. Why, you must get lonesome here with no one but your father."

"I've never had any one else," I replied, "and everybody has been very good to me."

"And you are your father's housekeeper?"

"Partly a woman comes in to help."

"I thought you were larger, older, though I have never noticed you especially. Well, some evening I'll bring my sister over. She has no children, to her great sorrow, so you must make friends."

"I shall be very glad to," I said.

Father came in before he went and they had a little talk, mostly about the good fortune that had befallen Norman.

Then we shut up the house and went to bed. Yes, it must be something like a funeral. The body went out of the house. I wondered how any one could bear to have it put in the ground. Norman had read about some country—I think it was Egypt—where they built real houses for their dead and put in them the things their relatives had used while alive, painted and carved pictures on the walls and went in to see them now and then. That seemed ever so much nicer than lowering them into the earth.

"But Norman isn't dead," I said to myself, "and he surely will come back." I ran it over in my mind. Seven hundred and thirty days. Each day would count.

I recalled the time I had first seen him and the warm welcome Mrs. Hayne had given us after that long journey. That was more than four years ago, and then I laughed softly to myself—why he would be away only half that time, and the four years had not seemed long. So I dropped asleep quite happy.

For some time I think I lived mostly in the past. I began to go to school again. Spring came in early and everybody was astir. Indians came down with pelts they had gathered through the winter and there were some wigwams put up out on the prairies where they held powwows and dances and laid out in the sun and smoked pipes. They were a lazy lot and they hung around until all their money was spent. They were paid largely in clothing, blankets and useful articles, but they kept trading them off, and though there were

some stringent rules about selling them any quantity of whiskey, they managed to get it all the same. Then, by degrees they started off north again to join their brethren who objected to civilized life.

But there was quite a stationary residue. The squaws seemed to improve much faster than the braves, though they had all the hard work to do. They dug up the ground and planted corn and other vegetables, they dressed skins and made clothing and moccasins and ornamental bead work, which they sold. Occasionally some of the traders bought a store of it to take to the eastward.

Father kept adding to his stretch of prairie land all the time. He had the true Yankee thrift as I came to know afterwards. Yet at this early date Yankees were not held in very high esteem and peddlers were rather tabooed. Indeed, at one time there had been a license of fifty dollars exacted for selling wooden clocks in the whole State. The law was against "bringing in and selling." But the shrewd Yankee evaded this by some parties bringing them in, and quite another party selling them. So it was proved that neither man was amenable to the law, which presently fell into desuetude.

There had been another funny point in the license of Mr. Mark Baubein when his ferry was first established. He kept two racing horses and was very fond of getting up a trial of speed with some of the young Indians who were crazy over this amusement. So he was ordered to ferry the citizens of Cook County from daylight in the morning until dark without stop-

ping, and the query was whether the citizens were compelled to go without stopping.

The Tremont Hotel was being builded anew, and some of the seventeen houses erected again. Much more care was taken. There seemed to be a general awakening throughout the town. Streets were lengthened and Wolf's Point at the junction of the two branches of the river did not seem near so far away.

There were public and private schools, the latter being used mostly for girls. I began to make friends with them, living over the river and going only in pleasant weather had kept me out of their latitude and influence. I had been rather a shy little girl and Norman had been company enough. But I came to have a wistful sort of longing for some of my own kind.

Mrs. Hayne was very sweet and motherly. She tried to persuade father to move over her side of the river. It had the most advantages, she would argue.

"You wait and see," father would reply. "We're going to spread out, I can tell you. There's room enough for two cities, and I have so much outlying land. I'm in for raising hogs now and I want plenty of room."

Then he would look doubtfully at me and with a half laugh say: "I wish I had two girls instead of one," and I wished it as well.

Mr. Harris brought his sister to see us. She was a Mrs. Chadwick, a very sweet, quiet-looking woman, with none of the breeziness of Mrs. Hayne. Her husband was very much interested in the government and

improvement of the town, and as there were no public halls the men generally gathered at some of the better class taverns and discussed the public weal. Father often went, though he did not take any active part. Neither did Mr. Harris, for he attended closely to business and spent his evenings at home.

"But what does your little girl do?" asked Mrs. Chadwick. "Surely you do not leave her alone?"

"I'm not afraid," I said. "I put up the bar and sew or read until he comes home, or M'liss comes up and sometimes the boys."

"Abner, we must have her up with us. I have no little girls, but I think we could entertain you. We have plenty of books to read."

"I'd be mighty glad to have you take her in hand," said father. "Mrs. Hayne's been like a mother, but you see that's a good streak off, and when she doesn't go to school it's rather lonesome."

"Of course you miss Norman very much," Mr. Harris commented, "he was a nice steady fellow. Dan's smart too, but rather wild. I don't know as this town is the best place to bring up boys, but still we've turned out some pretty nice men. I suppose there's a time when most of them kick over the traces, but they get broken in when they marry."

There had one letter come to Mrs. Hayne from Norman. They were at Detroit and were going up to the Straits. He had been very busy and a good deal homesick, he admitted, but he liked Mr. Le Moyne, and would never be sorry that he had started out in life. There were so many wonderful things in the

world. At the Straits he would write more at length. "Give my love to little Ruth," he said, "and tell her she shall have a good long letter."

A week or so after their visit Mr. Harris came for me. It was not very far. They had quite a pretty cottage and a really beautiful garden. It was light enough to walk through it, and I was delighted. I had a vague idea that I had seen such gardens in our old State. Great bunches of camomile with their snowy disks and pungent odor, sweet Williams of almost every color, a tall row of hollyhocks just coming into bloom ranged along the fence, a bed of sweet herbs, lavender, thyme, sage, and there had been roses. I thought the most beautiful of all were the tall spikes of pure white lilies that I had never seen before, but I came to know afterward were annunciation lilies, and I never see the Virgin with her branch of bloom but it carries me back to that evening in the old garden.

The house downstairs had a sitting-room, a kitchen with a sort of shed-room off, and a sleeping-room. The first named had a fine rag carpet on the floor of Marty Pettengill's weaving and several boughten chairs that had come from Buffalo. Tall brass candlesticks and a pair of curious bronze-like pitchers with a gay-colored band about their necks and an oval of a girl's face set in their sides, that always interested me very much; a table between the windows with a Bible and hymn book, and a somewhat tarnished gilt frame mirror that broadened out at the top with a sort of cornice that enclosed a picture that I used to study of a young man in a boat and a girl just

stepping into it. She held up a blue gown that was meant for silk by the shine of it, and had the daintiest slippered foot laced up over the instep with black cord. I admired her very much at first, then I grew tired of her, for I wanted to have her step into the boat and see him row away.

Upstairs, where we went presently, Mr. Harris had a sleeping chamber and what we might now call a library, or a den. There was a pair of huge antlers over the narrow mantle that divided off the fireplace. There were several guns and powder horns and some Indian trophies, and curious things I knew afterward were lichens from forest trees. The chairs were mostly homemade, and there was a box lounge with an Indian blanket over it. In both corners of the chimney from there to the wall were shelves with books and various curiosities from many parts of the continent.

"Here's where Norman and I sat and read after I found he had a liking for books," Mr. Harris said. "Books are my choicest friends. You run to verses, though, don't you?" looking at me. "I suppose that is natural for girls."

"Well, I don't know," interposed Mrs. Chadwick. "When I was a little girl I just hated verses, perhaps because I was compelled to learn them by heart, and occasionally speak a piece for the entertainment of my mother's friends. Stories were considered very demoralizing and giving children and young people false views of life. We were allowed 'Rosamond and the Purple Jar,' on account of the fine moral."

She laughed softly.

"Rosamond—" I repeated doubtfully.

"Oh, haven't you ever seen that?"

"No, ma'am," I admitted frankly.

"Oh, Abner, do read it to the child," she exclaimed smilingly.

Mr. Harris had lighted two candles and stood them on a stand that I remember was painted green, and a gay-colored mat on it.

So I heard Rosamond and her unwise choice. I had seen some glass jars with colored liquid in them at Mr. Carpenter's drug store, but I couldn't understand even then how any one could make such a sacrifice to possess one.

"Why, I should have found some poke berries and mashed them up and put some water on them," I said, "and there are dye stuffs—"

"Perhaps poke didn't grow in Rosamond's country," said Mrs. Chadwick with a laugh.

"I'd rather had a jar of flowers, though that would not have lasted," I added as an afterthought.

"And you do not like the story?"

"I think Rosamond was a foolish girl."

"So her mother thought, and she made her suffer for it—learn by experience, as we say."

Mr. Harris laughed heartily.

"What else did you do when you were a little girl?" I asked with some curiosity. It seems strange to one in childhood that a grown-up woman could ever have been a little girl.

She had lived in Philadelphia and been one of quite a large family of plain Methodist people, almost as

strict as Quakers. She had gone to Western New York with a married sister and had met Mr. Chadwick there and married him, and after they had moved to Chicago her brother Abner had come out. Most of the older members of the family were dead. Her sister lived at Ithaca now and had quite a large family, with some grandchildren.

I was wonderfully interested in these reminiscences; indeed, I was quite captivated by Mrs. Chadwick. She was very different from Mrs. Hayne, and I wondered if it was not disloyal to like her so well. I understood afterward that it was the difference made by education and leisure.

It was a very pleasant evening and gave me some new ideas. Mr. Harris brought me home. Father had come back and was sitting on the doorstep smoking his pipe.

"I was wondering if I had lost my little girl!" he exclaimed with a short half laugh. "But I guess I should have known where to look for her."

"We shall be very glad to have her any time," was the response, "and you must not leave her here alone. Not that there's anything to fear, but it's lonesome."

"I look out for that," and father nodded, drawing me closer to his knee and tightening his arm about me. We did love each other dearly, but people in that day were not effusive. There was so much work to do in the new countries that affection ran more to deeds than words or caresses.

A few days after I had my grand, glad surprise—a letter from Norman. From Detroit they had gone up

to Marquette on Lake Superior, where there was a great deal of business to straighten out and claims to adjust. The world was wonderful and splendid. One hardly had any idea of it in Chicago, and Mr. Le Moyne was proving one of the most generous and charming of friends. Norman was learning French. It was almost universally used up there, and Mr. Le Moyne was a great reader of French literature and knew pages of it by heart. "I wish you could study it, too," he wrote, and then he gave me places to trace out on the map where they had been; and there was the great Lake Superior and the Indian countries, the most elegant furs one could imagine, and a variety of strange and beautiful animals. The trading stations and the small towns were so picturesque, the people curious indeed. Altogether it sometimes seemed like a dream to him, and he could not put half the wonderful things in a letter. They were to return to Detroit and I was to send a letter there and tell him all about myself, and if I missed him very much, if I took the old walks and read the old poems over, and what I was learning.

At that period mails were slow and uncertain, and letters were often sent by friends. An appeal had been made to the general government, and Mr. Hogan was postmaster, combining it with some other businesses. The little old place was quite a rendezvous on mail day, though no one was ever certain of that even. A row of old boots nailed up for mail boxes created much amusement. But mere friendship letters were a rarity. Indeed, writing a letter was considered a great feat. If

116 A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD CHICAGO

one heard from friends once a year it brought content. Postage was very high, and in new countries money was scarce.

I labored over my letter, writing it first on various scraps of paper, as I could think of things I wanted to say. Books are written nowadays with more ease.

## CHAPTER VIII

### WITHOUT NORMAN

IT seemed suddenly as if Chicago took a great leap. Perhaps the whole country was more prosperous. But everybody was full of business, and immigrants were pouring in at the rate of ten a day, the newspaper announced. They were of all kinds. Some from Virginia, many from the two States south of us, hardy people with an uncouth dialect and new ways that were more or less picturesque. The men had been great hunters and could hardly adapt themselves to any employment at first. The women were used to all kinds of household work. They hatched flax and it was very entertaining to me to see the mass swept across the sharp wires and the person drawing her body back with a monotonous croon, then starting forward again. The soft silvery stuff was laid in a pile by itself, and how beautiful it looked. The rough and coarse strands were for common uses.

I could spin quite well now, but I used to love to watch these other spinners with their deft motions. The big wheel fairly fascinated me, and the nimble

running back and forth. The great dye tubs, too, with their yellows and browns, blues, and reds and the long hanks of yarn hung out in the sun, dipped over and over to darken them until they made some really handsome shades.

Besides these people there came quite a colony of French in our neighborhood. I was glad of this, though it seemed as if their "jabber" was too intricate to be taken up by any native tongue. Their attire was much more picturesque than that of the Kentucky women, and they disported themselves in brighter colors. A short skirt, a bodice laced up both front and back, and above this a white body with sleeves, the neck drawn in with a ruffle and tied with a bright ribbon. White stockings and low shoes with a great buckle, though some of the older people had these laid by as mementoes of their younger days. The church was at quite a distance and a priest came over and held service in the morning for them in a little log house. I used to love to watch them going to and fro with prayer book and rosary and happy, smiling faces, always chattering.

There were Germans, too. We seemed fair to be a conglomerate town. All along the lake, houses were stretching up north and down to the southern end. The shipyard was a scene of activity; indeed, most people were very busy. Wheat fields and cornfields increased and cattle were multiplying. Everything rushed through the summer; indeed, it seemed as though one could see the corn grow; and was there ever a prettier sight than when it tasselled out and

blossomed in the soft yellow. It was like a great army. I used to look at it sometimes until I could believe it was a giant host advancing, and I would shrink back in fright.

We had a school on our side that summer, and what with that and Mrs. Chadwick, I did not go to the Haynes' as often as before. Ben and Homer came over frequently. Homer was a big fellow, almost as tall as Dan, and quite a favorite with the girls as well. There were many pleasure parties for the grown-up ones—rowing, when the lake was not too rough, and sailing parties. Some of the more venturesome ones took an excursion over to Black Rock.

Our nearest French neighbors were the Piagets, and the two girls, Sophie and Nanette, soon became very friendly. Nanette was a little younger than I, Sophie, nearly two years older, bright, vivacious girls, who had some accomplishments beyond our ken. We sewed patchwork, but it was difficult to get pieces, though now and then a quilt was made of blue and white. But Sophie could make fringe with an ingenious knot in it, and she could knit edging. That set all us girls crazy to learn.

They talked rather broken English and were very eager to perfect themselves. And after screwing my courage up many degrees I confessed I would like to learn French. What work we made of it, and how we laughed at the German tongue! You began to hear it quite often in the street.

M'liss had taken up her abode with us. Jed Hatch had gone lumbering up the lake, above where Mil-

waukee now stands, where there was some fine timber that could be rafted down in auspicious weather. They had what we should now call a logging camp. Father wondered how they had ever persuaded Jed to join them, but I think M'liss had a strong hand in it. So she brought little Joe, who was now quite a respectable baby. Mrs. Chadwick had more than once said to father some woman ought to come in and take charge, and M'liss thought she made a good bargain hiring out her house for a certain amount of repairs.

M'liss brought her big wheel, the little one I had already, but when I would have spun she turned me away with a gentle push and—

"Oh, you jest g'lang. Ther' be time er nough nex' winter, when you can't run out en play en skip round. En ther's so little work to do I'm main afeared I'll git rickets by so much sittin' still."

Then M'liss was in her element cooking, and father enjoyed that.

Sophie was very eager to see Chicago. They had lived inland many miles from Kaskaskia, and as I came to know afterward, had a hard struggle with poverty.

"I think everybody has come from somewhere else," she said one day, when I had been telling about the Haynes, the Wrights, and ourselves.

"Why, of course," I said, "people don't grow in new countries like trees. They have to come from somewhere else," and she laughed.

It was true enough. When we arrived at a time when we would have liked a Mayflower or a Holland Mynheer, Virginia Cavaliers, or Spanish Dons, behold

we had no ancestry that had risen out of the foam or been transplanted by fabled Deity. Only sturdy, courageous, hard-working pioneers who had seen an objective point and seized it and dreamed of being a connecting link between the East and the West and then worked mightily to make the dream come true.

We rambled about the old places. The Ouilmette cabin had fallen into ruins, but the memory of the trader and his Indian wife still hung about it. We went over to the fort, that began to show signs of neglect. Here were the unmarked graves of those who had perished and we trod softly. Grass and a few wild flowers were springing up over them. Mrs. Heald and her beautiful horse stirred Sophie as it had me.

"If you came out here and stayed until midnight, don't you suppose you could see her go riding down to escape the Indians?"

I shuddered. "I don't believe I should want to be here at midnight," I said, rather awestricken.

"Wouldn't you try a charm to see your future husband?" she queried.

"I don't imagine I shall ever have a husband," I said, with a curious kind of assurance about the future. I seemed to belong altogether to father.

"Oh, I wouldn't stay single for anything," she cried, "and here, where you don't need to have a dot, it must be easy to get a husband."

"A dot?" I repeated in perplexity.

"Why, yes. In France, *Ma mère* had to have some money beside a string of gold beads and two rings and

some bed and table linen. Papa's mother would hardly consent then. You have to get the permission of the parents on both sides, and then you have two marriages."

"How queer! Why, it is almost like buying your wife," I said, and I felt my eyes open wide.

"And now we are poor enough," and she sighed. "I don't know whether Nanette and I could have any dot. Then you generally go in a convent and become a sister, but I shouldn't like to be shut up and only visit poor people and those in trouble. There is a convent in New Orleans and in Canada."

I did not think I should like convent life either. The Piaget girls went to the Catholic Church in state, and the priest was Father Shoffer. It was moved to the rear of St. Mary's Cathedral afterward and used as a school-room, but children of all denominations went to school together. The Methodist Church had been moved across the river two years before on scows, the first building of any account to be moved intact. Everybody had thronged to see the wonderful achievement.

We used to wander by the edge of the great lake, often picking up shells in the sand. I had quite a collection, some beautiful ones Norman had given me. Homer had made me a box that I covered with them, arranging the choicest ones on the top in a figure as near to a rose as I could get it.

Ben used to walk with us sometimes. The magnificence of the lake down here, where there was no business and nothing but the swelling waves to ruffle its

bosom, always filled me with a kind of reverent awe. The great space ending—where? To my childish mind it was like the ocean that I had never seen. I could not truly believe there were villages and wide stretches of ground on the other side. I liked its immensity. Several times we had been here on a moonlight evening, when it was silvered over and set with tiny gems. All at the west and south stretched the dusky, blurring expanse, but to the eastward one could imagine that one could sail into the heaven that touched the farther boundary of the great inland sea. That wonderful angelic blue with its myriad stars! Were they worlds in which the souls of the redeemed lived again? I wanted to talk all my new thoughts over with Norman. I seemed to have acquired so many in this brief while.

There was another great excitement about this time. Was it really four years since the last Presidential election? The town was all astir again. The same candidates were put up. Dan Hayne did a good deal of electioneering, though it was not in such a very eager manner. I believe most of the people felt very sore about the canal that was to open the Mississippi to us, which dragged along to little purpose. Then the postal regulations were so inefficient, and there was a complaint about many things, confusing State and general government. The Kentucky people were all for General Jackson, and some of the old men declared they'd vote for him as long as they lived whether he was alive or not. The two papers indulged in sharp rejoinders, and occasionally stretched the point of

truth, at least each accused the other of doing it. Father pinned his faith upon the American.

People were very busy, too, with the abundant harvests. Such splendid yield of wheat as there had been! And to think of all this labor done by hand! One would have been smartly ridiculed if he had predicted the day of mowers and reapers and great grain elevators run by steam. Many a moonlight night men turned out and worked until they almost dropped, some did stop in their tracks and take a brief nap on a fragrant bed, with the stars for watchers. For the winter was coming, when Nature took her rest and locked our little world with her icy chains.

There was beef and pork packed to send away, piles of hides, bushels of grain, and the prominent business men left politics to care for itself awhile. The river and the docks were thronged and piled high, we thought then. Ben was much interested in this, and now had gone in Norman's place, though Mr. Hubbard's business was growing larger every year, and new warehouses were pushing in.

But we children went to school, and at home followed the useful arts—spinning, sewing, knitting and cooking. We had little time for the fripperies of life. They were to come later.

I did not forget my reading with Mrs. Chadwick, though I was growing very fond of the girls and girls' play. Jed Hatch had not come back, so M'liss remained with us. There was a great stir about the copper mines in northern Michigan, and the lead at Galena. Then coal was being discovered here and

there, and men's wits were put to work in inventing labor-saving and money-saving machines.

We did not care much about these, though the neighbors who stopped at the garden gate or sat awhile on the stoop talking to father wondered a little if this or that could not be done, and sometimes laughed at father when he predicted great things for the future of Chicago. We did not look much like it in those days, though people were beginning to build brick houses and replace their old log structures with frame. Many of the streets were simply staked out. And when the Wrights built their really pretty mansion down near what was the end of Madison Street, they were laughed at as going out on the prairie.

Good water seemed a serious question. There were so few springs good for anything. We caught rain water in the wet season and filtered it, putting it in bottles for time of need, when after a good shaking up it answered very well. The water from the lake was fine if taken from a little distance out or farther up. The river was simply dreadful.

One of the best springs had an odd story. The children used often to congregate about it and drink their fill. I used to wonder if it tasted as good to the stag at Monan's rill as to the thirsty children. It was called Colonel Baubein's punch bowl. Half a dozen years or so before, the State ordered that the militia of Cook County should be duly organized, and officers elected. There was quite a rivalry, but Mr. John Bau-bein was elected over all opposition, and it was resolved to have a fine celebration. At the base of a

small bluff the spring made a natural basin. This was dammed up across the outlet and a keg of brandy poured in. Six dozen lemons, four packages of loaf sugar were added, and the whole stirred with a new clean stick. Most of the town turned out, and sitting around swapped stories and drank punch until they absolutely lowered the novel punch bowl and went home in a high state of hilarity. For days after one and another stole down, happy even in getting a taste of the weaker stimulant.

It was delightful water long after that, and the two Baubein brothers were famous men in old Chicago.

Champaign squibs and songs had a new impulse just then. Even the children who could make rhymes to the glory of Tippecanoe. And then there was a sudden and well-nigh unexpected rejoicing—William Henry Harrison gained the day by a handsome majority.

Father was deeply delighted, though he did not exactly crow over his opponents.

"You'll see now," he said, "this will be the beginning of good times. Four years from now you will hardly know yourselves." No one could have imagined then his reign would be so brief.

"If there could be more money, more money," cried everybody. The canal was given up for better times, but the lake was left. And when one looked over the list of enterprising citizens and found the hides and wheat, the corn and pork and beef, the beans, salt, the furs, and the lead, there was no need of feeling

really discouraged. "Rome wasn't built in a day," was a favorite saying of father's.

Mrs. Hayne and I had good long letters from Norman. Mine were written at intervals and finished at Detroit, that, like some of the other towns, had a rather romantic history. It had been French and English, it had been a great trading place in the pioneer days; it had been turned over to the United States by treaty, then given up to the English by General Hull at the same time the order had been sent for the evacuation of Fort Dearborn. It had been destroyed by fire and rebuilt on a more generous plan, and bid fair to be a fine city.

But with all these interesting matters Norman's heart did not waver, and he was looking steadily forward. One year was almost gone. He had been very busy and happy, had proved of great service to Mr. Le Moyne, and had acquired much knowledge. He could talk French quite well, and was learning to read correctly. It seemed as if most of the northern world was French. Now they were to go to Montreal and Quebec. Would I find some histories or books and read up about those famous cities and the heroes who had fought and died for them? And would I tell him all about myself? Was I growing tall? And did my hair keep its beautiful light tint, and he hoped I would care for my complexion. He had seen some such beautiful girls, some splendid Indian maidens, so lovely he did not wonder white men married them. Did Ben come often, and did I like him very much? But I must not put any one in his place.

He could write ever so much more—and there were pages and pages in the letter, but there were so many things to do, and this letter would go by private hands, with some other matters consigned to Newberry & Dole. For postage was very high and increased with additional miles.

I read it to father, and he was very much pleased, but he made one little growl. There are some voices that express disapprobation that way, and it is really more amusing than unkind.

"Like Ben Hayne! Why, he's nothing but a big, soft-headed boy. Homer's smarter in his little finger than Ben's whole body."

"Ben is very nice and kind," I said honestly, "but Norman is the best of all."

He gave a chuckle at that. "You mark my words, Homer will be a rich man some day. I don't know about the rolling stones, though it did seem an excellent thing for Norman. But he will never come back here and settle in Chicago."

Long afterward that sentence recurred to me.

I took my letter over to Mrs. Hayne. Her's was a good deal on the same lines, only there were more to ask about. She made a different comment.

"Why shouldn't you like Ben!" she exclaimed, rather tartly. Then as she looked at me I felt hot all over. "Ben's a nice boy an' he'll make a nice man if he gets the right kind of wife. He will do quite as well as Norman, you'll see if he doesn't. I dare say Norme will get so stuck up with fine people an' talkin'

French that he'll hardly look at us when he gets back. I'm most sorry I consented to have him go."

"But he will be back in another year." I did not think he could change so very much in that time.

"Mebbe so, mebbe so," and she tossed her head.

There was not another girl in school who had a letter from a friend or who was asked to write one. My secret was too precious to be bruited abroad. I put it in my box of treasures and read it over when no one was by. It seemed very silly to do this, and yet I took fervent pleasure in it.

I was to write and have my letter go in a package Mr. Dole was to send. So when I had it finished I went over to the warehouse, for I would not trust it with Ben. I had some trouble to find Mr. Dole, and explained the matter to him.

"Yes, yes," he said, "I shall be glad to do this for you. I think he will be in Quebec before it reaches him, however."

"Thank you," I replied, with a little curtsy.

## CHAPTER IX

### WAS EVER LETTER HALF SO DEAR?

How eagerly we devoured the paper when the new President was inaugurated. The Whig party had a ball at the Tremont Hotel, and the young ladies who went held their heads very high for weeks. Polly Morrison and Peggy Garnier were the two belles. Miss Garnier was among the immigrants from the border of Kentucky. Her father had taken a great interest in cattle raising and packing. There were two smaller girls and a son, who certainly was a spoiled darling, even in those days. Margaret Garnier was tall and really handsome. Sixteen was grown up at that period. She had large, beautiful black eyes, and a great coil of black hair which, those who knew, said came down to her knees. A brunette complexion, not very dark, and color in her cheeks like an opening rose; by all odds, the handsomest girl in the room, it was said.

But Polly Morrison pressed her hard. She was tall and slim and with the liteness of figure that made every movement fascinating. And as for her dancing,

every man was crazy to dance with her, and when he had danced once he was bewitched and bound to dance again. She must have had some charm in spite of her red hair and her peculiar eyes. Her skin was very white and she rarely flushed all over her face, even when she had been dancing at her wildest.

Some of the girls in school had sisters or brothers who were present. Many of the married people went as well. I sat at home and studied my lessons, then knit some rounds on a pair of white wool stockings for myself, while M'liss told of some dances she had been to out at the old fort.

"An' how I could come to be sech an idjit as to marry Jed Hatch I can't fer the life of me 'xplain now, 'cept what is to be will be ef it doesn't come to pass in years, en ef 'tis writ down agin yer, yer can't 'scape it. An' now he's up yander 'n I'm jest as good as a d'serted wife, airnin' my own livin'."

I couldn't altogether fancy M'liss dressed up in an airy costume dancing. I had always thought her rather heavy footed.

Dan Hayne was one of the stars of the evening as well, and no one could have mistrusted as he and Peggy whirled round, and I sat between the chimney and the light stand knitting, that we three were marked out for a tragedy. Was it true what M'liss had said—"That what is to be will be?"

The girls discussed it eagerly at recess. Jenny Hale's sister Betty was at the ball and had spiced the breakfast with it.

"Pears like them two girls were jest neck and neck

for Dan Hayne, Bet said, 'n he was the han'somest feller in the room. An' Bet danced once with him 'n she didn't see that he was so much eleganter than Tee Kent, 'n she was glad she had a feller of her own. Bet's goin' to be married when Tee's house is done—long in May that'll be—en ther'll be some dancin' then, an' I'll have a sheer, you'll see!"

"You need a little grammar more than you do dancing," declared Martha Dole. "You talk as if you had just come out of the backwoods."

"Oh, you think you're great, Mat Dole! You're mighty stuck up on a little."

"Girls, don't quarrel," said a soft voice, "and it does seem as if we might pay a little attention to teacher. You know she wrote out a lot of words the other day that she asked us to be careful about. Some of us do talk outlandish."

"I'll talk as I like. I'm way ahead of you in figurin', an' I don't care a pin fer grammar. 'Twont help you keep house, 'n I'm goin' to be married first chance I have. I ain't hankerin' fer school teachin' and sech."

"What sort of rigs did they have on?" asked another girl. "My mother's got a satiny frock all lace and white ribbons that she was married in, and in a year or two I'll grow in it. You'll see me dancing when the next President goes in."

The bell rang and we filed back into school. M'liss heard about the ball, and it was dished up at supper.

"The men had a big dinner which was quite as sensible," said father, "except the whiskey, and if they

hadn't all been of one stripe they'd quarrelled. Strange men don't know enough not to get drunk!"

Dan Hayne was getting to be one of the young men of note—born lucky, people said. He was dickering in a good many things, and whatever he took hold of turned out well. He traded one of his horses for some wharf property and a few weeks afterward sold that at an advance, and so with most things. Chita, his beautiful mare, was the apple of his eye and always won in a race. If there was a purse she captured it.

A week afterward he had Miss Garnier out sleighing, for the snow was not all gone. The handsomest couple in Chicago, the men said, and the women predicted it would be a match.

Alas, in the midst of gayeties a great sorrow fell over the nation. The hero of the Indian wars, who had borne his former defeat with dignity, and his elevation to the highest office the nation could bestow, was suddenly called away from earthly honors. The nation mourned him sincerely. Mr. Tyler, the Vice-President, succeeded him, according to the Constitution.

Perhaps the whole country emerged from a period of prostration. Chicago, certainly did, and this time not to fall back into languor. The hogs were finally banished from the street. There had long been an estray pen, but it had proved no terror to evil doers. There was an attempt to make the streets passable, and the water question again came to the fore. There were some artesian wells, and some good water quite on the outskirts of the town. Court House Square was filled up somewhat, and the questions of raising the grade of

the streets was discussed, of a water supply, of deepening the bed of the river at its outlet and removing the sand bar, of new wharfs and docks to accommodate business. The papers were full of plans and schemes, and the completion of the canal was again strenuously advocated.

Father was a good deal interested in all these matters. I used to sit and listen to the talk and imagine what the town would be sometime, but no dream ever approached the marvellous reality. Occasionally Dan would stop. He and father were interested in corn and cattle. He had developed into a handsome fellow, but all the Haynes were good looking.

Quite in the summer word came to M'liss that her husband was dead up in Michigan. As he had never done much toward taking care of her, even child as I was, he did not seem much loss, but she took it very hard, and straightway endowed him with numerous virtues, and bewailed him in tones of anguish that really alarmed me.

"O, M'liss," exclaimed father, "do use a little reason and sense. You took more than half the care of him when he was home, and now for over a year you have not had a penny from him. You can support yourself and your child just as well without him as with him. And if you are hankering for another husband, I'll hunt up two or three likely men and give you your pick."

"It's all very well fer you to talk, Mr. Gaynor, but you only had a little gal to bring up, an' she's been the kind that doesn't jump over bars an' get outen the

pasture. But boys is diff'runt an' mighty high headed. En I'm thinkin' what I'll do whenst he grows up an' needs a strong hand—a man's hand. Poor fatherless lamb!"

"He seems a pretty good kind now," and father gave a dry smile. "Between you and me, M'liss, I guess we can manage to bring him up and have him trot in single harness. You can have a good home here as long as you like, so I wouldn't worry."

"But I've never lost a husband before, an' to have him snatched outen your hand without a momen's warnin', as one may say, is very tryin' to nerves. An' no funeral to speak of. Mebbe not a hymn sung over him. Everybody's sorrows is deepest."

Father took his hat and went out. M'liss caught up little Joe, who kicked and scrambled to be let down on the floor again.

"Oh, you poor lamb, you don't know what you've lost. You can never have a nuther father. Fer if I should marry again, which the Lord forbid, he'd only be a stepfather an' like as not be ugly to you."

Little Joe gave an expansive smile, showing his eight small white teeth, and pounded his mother's knee with his fist.

"I'll clear the table," I said, thinking to leave her to enjoy her sorrow.

"No, you needn't. I won't defraud any one, even if I am bowed down with grief. I've got to airn my livin' an' my child's livin', fer ther's no one to depend on now, an' I've heard say he who goes sorrowin' fills the pools with water, er somethin' like that. No, I'll

wash up. But I'd feel a heap better ef there'd been a funeral en a farewell to the remains. An' that ther' great big cimitery with hardly a livin' soul in it, where he'd be doubly welcome, I know."

She went at the dishes, and presently began to sing,

"Why should we mourn departed friends,  
Or shake at death's alarms?"

That seemed to be her favorite for days, but I wondered she did not comfort herself with the remaining half of the verse.

I think father felt altogether resigned to the affliction of Providence. M'liss was a good cook and kept the house tidy. Sometimes he thought I wasn't learning enough to fit me to manage a house, but there were so many other interests. I was working away with spirit at the French. I knew a good many words, and when Madame Piaget found that I really wanted to learn, she gave me assistance more to the point than Sophie's desultory training.

It was a delightful, merry summer. Sophie knew some games and curious stories and was always ready for a walk, and whether I had not noted it before or whether civilization had induced it to compensate for the barrenness, there were new wild flowers springing up here and there, and how magnificent the prairies were in their long reaches over to the western world, to the infinite golden distances and the glittering splendors of the sunset. Then when the long spires of crimson faded into lavender and pale pink and blue, then soft grays and darkness settled about the edges,

coming nearer and nearer, like some weird army with a soundless step until one fairly shivered with a weird terror, and one's soul was entranced.

Crops were excellent. It seemed as if everything was prosperous and people were full of stir and spirit and hope. We girls used to go in town, as we called it. There were some stores with very pretty goods, and the two quite pretentious drug stores with red and blue jars. I told Sophie about Rosamond, and we wondered how any one could be so silly as to make a sacrifice for a purple jar.

"I just wish I could find some little girls willing to buy them. Mother makes such beautiful dyes," declared Sophie.

Madame Piaget, later on, made quite a little money by dyeing goods.

Of all the places, I liked the bookstore best. There were various articles besides books. Cigars, tobacco, papers from Black Rock, rather from the cities of the east. No matter if the news was a month old if we had not heard it before. Father was very fond of reading about the advances Boston was making.

"I wish we had a greater grasp of intelligence," he would say. Then with a sigh—"But one must have food and shelter first, and a town like this is going to cost a mint of money before we get through. Why, they're talking of raising the whole thing, so the river and the lake will not overflow. Pity it's so low, and no mountains about us to cast into the sea," with a chuckle. "If we had had faith to move 'em, we might transport some from Virginia or Tennessee, or we

might find some nearer home, up Michigan way, or farther west. But I'm afraid we haven't the faith, so we must go at the work with good courage."

The Chicago River was not very wide then, but it had a considerable depth. It seemed as if the earth had been split open at some time just as a mighty plough had turned a furrow. It had no current to speak of and was a source of great discomfort.

It was true Chicago did not begin intellectually. There was too much work to do, and all honor to those who evolved a great city out of a trading station after years of work.

But we did take note of what was going on outside. Dickens was attracting attention, and Mr. Harris and his sister were quite enthusiastic about him until he had visited America and written the "Notes," showing up a certain uncouthness and sharpness in national character that was very displeasing. As if England had reached her full glory in a few years instead of centuries. I liked Sir Walter Scott best, though Thackeray was much talked of. I was fond of the illustrations—how crude we thought them twenty years afterward! There was a Mr. Cooper writing Indian stories and novels of the earlier history of the country, but Boston was considered a kind of head centre. And though there were such stirring episodes all up and down the Mississippi River, the Gulf of Mexico and the islands below that, no one thought of putting them in print. Madame Piaget knew many stories about John Lafitte, who had once been such a terror and defied the authorities on his curious uncon-

querable island. But I liked to hear how he came and offered his services to General Jackson when New Orleans was in danger by the British; and I used to wonder about the old wonderful Spanish French town, with its balconies overhung with roses that bloomed all the year round, and the beautiful women sitting on them and looking down at the passers-by, the streets full of bright merriment and music.

Chicago had begun to consider a regular water supply. The water carts had been the main dependence. Now at Lake Street and Michigan Avenue plans were laid for a great reservoir. An iron pipe was to run out in the lake about a hundred and fifty feet to clear water. There was to be a big pump, worked by steam engines of twenty-five horsepower. Large logs were bored for the water to run through. We all thought it wonderful then, and throngs of people crowded around on Sunday to view the progress, making various amusing comments. Ten years later the work was renewed on what was considered a magnificent scale, and even this was presently outgrown.

I was happy and busy through those years and making friends with the girls, the boys as well. We all played together, rambled around, went to each other's houses and spent evenings in guessing riddles, telling stories and reciting incidents or poems. The girls joined in ball playing and running races. Polly Morrison distanced all competitors, even the boys. I used to like to see her. She never "wriggled," nor threw out her arms like sails, but seemed to cut the air in a straight line. It was like the flying of a bird.

There was no end of guesses that summer, I think bets as well, as to which of the girls would capture Dan Hayne. Miss Garnier held her head very high. Peggy was daring and lawless. She had no end of admirers and the young fellows almost fought for her. But she had some art to keep them from coming to blows. They always had a good time where she was, and a dull time without her.

I had two staunch friends that I dealt around to the girls I liked the best—Homer and Ben Hayne. I was too young to think of lovers. They were both very good to me. Homer was doing finely and his father was proud of him. Building was no high art in those days, but Homer possessed a certain attractive ingenuity. He could make a closet that had an ornamental air. He could put up a shelf and tack a bit of moulding on it and it set off the corner or the vacant space. He made an ingenious chair held by strong oak pins, that you could let down and transform into a bed. He designed such dainty mouldings with his array of beading planes. His charm was that he finished everything so exquisitely.

He had his heart set on making money. He meant to be "well to do." What a small sum then seemed to be a fortune. Father liked him very much and often advised him.

Ben had less originality and aim. On the booky side we agreed very well, but he had not the breadth nor quickness of Norman. When I bade him pause at some delightful thought that one wanted to linger over he would glance up with a smile of unreasoning obe-

dience. Everything I did and said was just right. He was a nice, steady, business fellow, but Mr. Harris admitted that Norman was worth two of him.

Mrs. Hayne was always sweet and motherly to me, but she was growing stouter and less energetic, though she kept her passion for cooking.

"If I had you down to the hotel!" Clement Ward used to say. "Though I d'now, you cook so all fired tasty an' temptin' that I might be et out of house an' home afore I knew jest what was the matter. There's no one in fifty mile that can give jest the flavoracity to victuals that you do. When I've et a meal here the taste stays in my mouth fer days. An sech pie crust!"

"Well, I've been cooking for men and boys all my life, afore I was married and since. An' Dan an' his father are powerful eaters. So 'twould be a poor story if I couldn't hit it jest right."

There was always plenty to cook, meat and game and several fine kinds of fish.

Then the day when the mail steamer came in was beginning to be one of expectation. I did not care for the ones that came down the lake, though they often brought valuable mail, but this came from the East. I had looked for a letter such a long while, it seemed to me, and early as I was the long line appalled me.

"You're John Gaynor's little girl!" said a friendly voice as I was peering about. "Come here, I'll make a little room, and he thrust out his arm, drawing me into the line just before him. "Father got any folks in York State?"

"No, but a letter may come from Canada."

"Whew!" he ejaculated. "Let me see—G— isn't it?"

They were sorting letters in the small room, and laying the piles on the floor.

"Denby," said my friend, "and John Gaynor."

"Here's a Gaynor, but it's a woman. Oh, yes, care of John, twenty cents postage."

You could not always pay postage through and no one made it a matter of compliment in those days. I had a quarter and some pennies beside.

"Here, I'll make change," he said, and I thanked him most sincerely. He smiled and nodded as I stepped out of the line and ran swiftly home. Norman had said the next letter would be all to myself.

It went in the great fire with hundreds of other choice treasures, but oh, what a delight it was to me! I had looked at the flag token in the morning, so I had not gone to school. Joe was playing about the door step, emulating the old monarch by eating grass. M'liss was washing out under the apple-tree, so I slipped into the room and threw my sunbonnet on the floor.

There were no envelopes, no dainty sheets of paper. This was "foolscap," written on three sides, and little spaces rescued on the fourth. Ah! what a delight it was. So much about the historic old city, the French residents, the English officers, the government and business, the picturesque houses with their pathetic stories. Norman could talk French almost like a native. And the business! Chicago would be amazed at the volume of it.

There was a great deal about Mr. Le Moyne, his kindly care, "almost as if I was a son," was the eager confession. The journeys they were taking about, the friends Mr. Le Moyne met, the charming and cultivated women, who played the piano and sang in the most delightful manner. It was like living in a story book. And he had to go everywhere, to do almost everything for Mr. Le Moyne, whose eyesight was poorer than ever. Presently when the business was all finished they would go to New York. And then he hoped to be able to come home. It seemed almost a lifetime to him.

"You are such a dear, sweet letter writer," he said. "The boys only send messages by mother, and she hasn't the fashion of telling me all the little things about them that you do. You picture everything so that I can see it. Mr. Harris writes about business and books, and what the *American* and what the *Democrat* says, and the squabbles of the city government. But I like to go down to the very heart of things, to know when you have a new frock, and the little companies you attended, and the plays and the walks, and the new wild flowers you have found. Is there any place like the boyhood home, any other little girl like you? Not if I should search the world over."

"I have been reading some wonderful plays by Shakespeare. Mr. Harris has a copy, I know. Ask him to let you see 'Midsummer Night's Dream.' We went to a theatre here in Quebec and saw it played. I can't tell why, but I thought of you all the time. 'If she were here, if she were here,' I kept saying to every

turn. It was enchanting. I cannot do it any justice in a letter, and I have written so much already. Oh, why can't people talk through space? I sometimes send messages on the wind—do you get them, dear? Send me back some. And—can you believe at Christmas or thereabout I shall see you? I measure six feet now, and sometimes I think I begin to look like Dan, only I shall never be as handsome. Tell me all about his girls. It's high time he was married."

It was written very closely, and oh, what a delight it was! I sat there all of a tremble hugging it to my heart. Joe was hammering on the steps with the new potato masher that Homer had made, and I never heard him. M'liss came in wringing her hands as if she was squeezing the suds out of them.

"Fer the land sakes! Haven't you done a bit about dinner? I see you come in, an' sez I, 'She'll peel the 'taters sure,' an' here you're sittin' calm as if dinners come to hand already cooked. Ye might as well bin in school, then I'd a-knowned jest what to do."

"I'm sorry," I said penitently. "But I had such a splendid long letter from Norman." Then I jumped up and there was a sound like a pistol. A continual dripping will wear away a stone saith the adage—the steady pounding on the stone had split my masher.

"Drat that young un!" M'liss gave him two or three slaps, and the roar of little Joe was terrific.

"Oh don't!" I cried, and went to comfort him.

"You'll jes' spile that fatherless child, who'll need a man to govern him 'fore long, he's that deestructive. You goin' to peel the 'taters or me?"

I smiled at the question, but went for the potatoes, and soon had them over the fire.

"Ther's beans to heat up, an' that ther huckleberry puddin' to steam over. People can't have much to do when they write letters so long it takes a whole mornin' to read 'em. I've got the clothes to hang up."

Joe had rolled over on the grass and was trying to catch "hoppers," laughing at the way they eluded him. I set the table, brought out the boiled ham and sliced it, and when father came in everything was ready.

He was intensely interested in the letter.

"I do wonder how Chicago will look to him after all the fine cities he's seen. I sometimes think I was a fool to come out here. Then when I see the wheat standing so thick with great golden heads, and the corn rushing along like a regiment, and the pigs fattening, and the hens laying eggs, I say it's about as good a country as the Lord has made anywhere. Only if he'd raised the ground a little higher just around 'twould a been more to my liking, and there are plenty of mountains that could have spared a slice off of them."

I went over to the Haynes' in the afternoon. Mother Haynes's letter had come too. She was beginning to have trouble with her eyesight, and her spectacles didn't seem to fit rightly. So she was glad to have me read it aloud to her. Mr. Le Moyne had raised Norman's salary, and said he would never be able to spare him. And Norman was very happy, only he did want to see all the home folks. Did father keep well, and was little Chris growing? Why didn't some of the boys

**146 A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD CHICAGO**

write to him? With all the pleasure and the business it was hard to be away from everybody.

"Harder for him than for us," and the mother sighed.

I read her my letter except some paragraphs that had a kind of sacred feeling to me, though there was nothing very secret in them.

And if we could see him by Christmas!

## CHAPTER X

### A WILD RIDE

It was truly a gay summer for the grown-ups. There were rowing parties on the lake, and picnics came quite in vogue. Dan Hayne was doing a little of everything, buying and selling lots, interested in lead, in cattle, taking short journeys here and there to view coming prospects. Withal he found time for girls, went to dances, drove them out, and just when some one thought him caught, he was off with the old fancy.

Miss Garnier seemed to like him very much, or was it the spirit of coquetry? For in August a young Kentuckian of one of the first families suddenly appeared on the scene, and then it was said they had been lovers and quarrelled, and now made up again. A date was set for a speedy marriage in St. James' Church, to the great surprise of everybody.

How would Dan Hayne take it?

He took it with a jaunty indifference, and not only went to the wedding, but led the procession that saw the bride start on her journey to her new home.

"She was an awful flirt," declared Polly Morrison, "but I knew he didn't mean to marry her."

Even Polly held her head quite high in those days, and seemed to take pleasure in parading her numerous admirers.

The school girls were playing under a group of cottonwood trees one afternoon, when Polly and two or three of the older ones paused and joined the merriment. Sophie Piaget was telling charms. They should have gone out on St. John's night and walked three times around the church. On the way home you would hear a name called, and that would be the name of your future husband. Then you counted nine stars nine nights in succession, and you were sure to marry the first man you shook hands with.

"But what if you didn't like him, or if he was married," suggested some one.

"Then you mustn't shake hands with him," laughed Polly. "Save your shake for some one you do like."

"Oh, let's go out and get Shubenca to tell our fortunes."

They all rose in eagerness. Shubenca was an old Indian woman who did predict remarkable events, and they sometimes came true.

It was not far to the tepee, though two or three girls suggested it might be better to go home and help get supper.

"Will you have *your* fortune told?" Several of the girls were hanging on Polly.

"Yes, first of all, I've a silver shilling to cross her hand, so it's sure to come true."

"Oh, dear, but will we have to pay?" exclaimed a chorus in vexation of spirit.

"I'll make her tell a lot for the shilling." Polly was in high spirits and a generous mood.

We found Shubenca sitting by the side of the tepee, thumbing a pack of cards. She gave a careless nod and went on. Polly stated the purport of the visit and displayed the shilling. The black eyes snapped with desire.

"How many?" in her guttural tone.

"Let me see—Sophy and you, Letty, and Caroline—well, say six."

The woman shook her head. "Too little, too little," she said with a frown.

"Oh, very well. I can tell the fortunes myself for nothing," and Polly turned with a toss of the head.

The woman caught her skirt.

"Three," she said—"three," in an eager voice.

"No, six," in a decisive tone.

"Too much for the money."

Polly threw it from hand to hand, catching it in a tempting manner.

"Well, well," with a reluctant grunt. "You first?" giving her a piercing glance.

"Yes, so the others can take courage."

She looked at her hand and nodded curiously.

"You get your heart's desire after a long while," she said in her broken English. "You want it very much, but you go past it and then sorrow. A fair girl picks up what you have thrown away, and you hate her." How the eyes gleamed! It made me shudder.

I had gone past the old woman to where a younger one sat doing some bead work. Little ones played about in their noiseless fashion. I caught sentences at intervals. She would have two husbands and journeys, go away and come back, and meet the man she loved and be happy with him. "He throw away the fair one for you—she too pale, too thin, she not love enough."

"Well, so that I get him at last."

"You be wild for very joy."

"Yes, that is good. That is what I like."

Sophie Piaget came next. A husband of course. First she thinks she cannot have him, for he love another, then "it is not love, no, no!" shaking her head.

Some one came galloping over the stubble, and we all knew the horse and rider. He reined up suddenly. Polly nodded indifferently.

"You promised me a ride on Chita," began Nannie Piaget, patting the beautiful creature, who tossed her head gayly.

"Did I? Well, now is a good time. Can you jump up? And you won't squeal for fright? If you do I shall let you drop."

"Oh, are you in earnest?" in a delighted tone.

"To be sure. Now—step on my foot and spring."

That was successfully achieved. He settled her in front of him, put one arm around her, and off they sped. What a beautiful sight she was, and her rider sat her proudly. They appeared smaller and smaller as we watched them. I had lost interest in the fortune

telling. Then the moving speck grew larger, and they came in sight again until Chita trotted up to the throng with what seemed a laugh in her eye.

"Oh, that's splendid! It's like going on the wings of the wind."

Surely it was. I had watched them until it stirred every pulse within me. Chita seemed human in her enjoyment.

Old Shubenca's inspiration seemed to give out, though she eyed Polly suspiciously. The last two fortunes might have pleased little girls. They were of new frocks and surprises, and a great pleasure coming this way, and some one who cared for you, listened to with girlish giggles.

Dan set down Letty Dole, who was profuse in her expressions of delight. I don't know whether I looked wistful. I wanted to hug Chita and she turned and put her nose in my hand. What mystery was there in her eyes?

"We must all go home," began Polly, peremptorily, turning the girls in a kind of squad.

"Here's one who has not ridden Chita, nor any other creature, I think—this little Gaynor girl."

"It's too late, Dan. And then she's such a timid little thing. No, let her alone."

"It's time she had some courage put in her then," and he laughed gayly.

I was not a coward. I often ran over the wretched bridges when the logs tilted so that you were in danger of falling in. And I really was not afraid of ghosts nor cows, not even mice.

"No, no. Let her alone. Come, children. Come, Ruth."

Dan Hayne was fond of having his own way, and crossing other people's wills. There was an imperious note in Polly's tone. How it happened in an instant no one perhaps could have told. I turned, Chita backed a step or two, and then a strong arm caught me just above the waist line, and I was whirled up on Chita's back in front of Dan.

"Oh, don't, don't!" I cried.

"Dan, put her down!" commanded Polly.

The only reply was a gay laugh as we bounded away. Dan slackened a moment and settled me, holding one arm tight about me, and then we went on that loping gait that seems like the motion of long swells. It almost took my breath away.

The sun had set in vague levels of dun, purple clouds, now making a gradual darkening of the atmosphere, though it did not betoken any coming storm. All about was softened, not like a fog, but a tenuous veil. The stubble stretched out like a sea, and seemed to light the path, but presently we came to the coarse prairie grass, at which Chita gave a snort of disdain. On and on we flew. It was unlike anything in my narrow experience. I had no thought, no care, no fear, it was exhilarating, fascinating. Were we riding into the night and the unknown? For the pale yellow edges of the level bars had vanished, it was all smooth darkness over to the westward. And then a narrow golden crescent hung out in the sky. All the east-

ward was growing bluer with the suggestion of infinite space.

It was afterward, many a time, that I recalled this wild ride, the weird loneliness, the penetrating silence in which one feels what bated breath means.

"So, girlie, so," said a soft voice that recalled Norman, and Chita slackened her pace, came to a standstill.

"Are you afraid?" He almost pressed the breath out of me.

There was a cry of some wild animal. It seemed to smite the night like blows, growing fainter at the end, but I shivered.

Dan drew me up closer. I could feel his heart beat against my back.

"No, I am not afraid." Somehow I was not with him.

"Well, you *are* plucky," with an oath. "And you don't even want to scream?"

"Why—no," yet I was confused and bewildered.

"Suppose I dropped you down here and rode off?"

"But you wouldn't," I returned confidently.

He gave me still a tighter squeeze. "No, I might murder the man I hated in hot blood, but I couldn't be cruel to a kitten if it was entrusted to my care."

"Oh, Dan, you could do a worse thing than leave me there on the lonely prairie to perish. But I like to think that you did not dream of it then."

"Now, Chita, take it easy. This little girl isn't any more afraid of the dark than you."

Chita gave an answering whinny. We turned toward the east, where the stars were faintly stealing through the space that seemed tintless at first and then grew bluer. How curiously timid they seemed, how they blossomed out in amber and opal and chrysoprase. Afterward I came to know their names, their path to the summit of glory and their decline, to wander for years, perhaps, and then reign again in new effulgence.

I was almost sorry to come back to sordid civilization, crooked streets and mean houses and dark ways: Taverns and hotels hung out lights; the rest of the town was buried in darkness. Here and there some one had raised a sidewalk; you went up two or three steps and then went down again. But there was often a candle burning in a window.

Father was pacing up and down the path. We had a front fence now to keep out strays, though we could drive them to the pen.

"I began to think you were never coming back. Nanny Piaget came and told me. Dan Hayne, you must have been struck in a new spot, gallivantin' a lot of young ones round; and you so choice of that mare you hardly let a stray hand touch her. She's splendid, but my advice to you is to give up racing and all that and settle down, marry and have young ones of your own; but I'll venture a five months' shoot you won't be careering round prairies half the night with them. Ruth, ain't you going to light and let Dan go home?"

I held out my arms to father. Dan bent over and kissed me on the mouth, then handed me down.

"Gaynor, I think you're long headed buying all prairie land," he said. "It'll be a fortune for the Little Girl some day."

"Meanwhile it'll raise corn and feed hogs," father said with a chuckle. "Ruth, ain't you going to give a word of thanks for your safe return? Why Dan might have broken both your necks."

"Dan ain't that kind," laughed the young fellow in his proud strength. "Good-night, little one. John, I wish you'd go down to the Wabash with me and look at some cattle—say, in about ten days."

"I'll see," returned father.

I felt stiff and strange, as if I must walk on a sort of gallop and had no strength to do it. M'liss was all curiosity and insisted that we must have gone to the end of the world, and the supper was cold and not fit to eat because she had "het it over and over."

I did not want much and went to bed very soon. I still felt bewitched.

We all talked of our rides the next day at school, and thought Chita the most splendid horse in Chicago.

After Sunday School Polly Morrison came over with a curious glitter in her eyes and snatched at my hand.

"That was a pretty caper you cut up with Dan Hayne!" she said in a sharp, angry tone. "If you begin this way you'll be the talk of the town in a year or two."

"I didn't want to go at first," I answered rather resentfully. "But then it was splendid."

## 156 A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD CHICAGO

"My advice to you is to keep out of Dan Hayne's way. Still, you're nothing but a chit! Set your cap for Homer or Ben."

"I don't want to set it for anybody," I returned, jerking my arm away.

One confessed to liking boys, and boys and girls played together, but lovers were quite different, not to be expected until you were grown up, and most of the courtships were very pronounced and rather brief. It was a sort of settled matter that Dan and Polly, who were unlike the average, would make a match some day. They sparred, and, like the smaller children, "made up," danced, went out riding—she had a saddle horse—and then for weeks tossed their heads loftily at each other. He went off down the Wabash and then to Cahokia, but Polly did not lack for attendants.

How busy the town seemed. Now the canal started afresh. Some of the old indebtedness was wiped out. The land along the border was sold in plots, and men set to work on a new basis. To hear them talk, it sounded as if values increased daily.

Sophie Piaget and I became very dear friends. I am not sure but I ought to include Homer. If he came to our house first we walked down to the Piagets; if Sophie came up we spent the evening in some simple games. Neither she nor Homer cared much for books. But she was very industrious and handy, with a certain French ingenuity, I suppose I ought to call it. She and her mother did fine dyeing and they made over gowns, or indeed concocted new ones. Sophie could tie a bow to perfection, straighten out crumpled

artificial flowers, and give them a touch of fresh color that made them blossom anew. She really had the beautiful side of an artist without the intellectuality. But new countries have little demand for this. The fine arts came later.

There was a long pleasant fall. Business was thriving. Father built two new rooms on the house. We were beginning to have parlors, though the old-fashioned keeping room, where you sit and work and talk to your friends, the spinning wheel in one corner, the dresser with its drawers holding table linen, the shelves above for the best dishes, the commodious settle and the Boston rocker, hold a charm that modern rooms cannot give, for they had the heart of family life.

The winter brought great changes to me, set my life in a different key, the octave above childhood, girlhood, before the woman begins to unfold. I had been undersized, a truly little girl. Now I suddenly shot up like a sapling, not particularly thin, but slim, and outgrew all my skirts. I felt very, very sorry. I did not want to be grown up.

Sophie was delighted. Nanette kept pace with me. So did Letty Dole and Bessy Hale. We were not going to school. Fourteen was considered old enough to begin the real work of life. I was not quite that, but the house seemed to demand me. For M'liss, with all her sorrow of widowhood, had consoled herself and was to give her boy the strong hand to guide him through perilous ways. On the other side, she was to undertake two girls, six and eight. Mr. Weaver had

a farm down south branch, kept cows and supplied people with milk.

I was very sorry to have her go. I had grown fond of the baby, who was a great chatterbox and extremely funny little chap, and M'liss was an excellent cook, good and strong, and housework was hard for girls and women in those days.

There was all the new part to clean and set to rights. We had a fine whitewashed wall and a thick soft rag carpet. My chamber opened on this room as well as father's. Then there was a big room upstairs that we did not need at present.

M'liss was married in the morning and went to her new home at once. We both cried at the parting, for we were to be nearly two miles apart.

"I don't mind anything so much as that," she said. "If I could run in every day or two and cook a meal for you. I don't believe that old Jolette will be worth her salt, and you've studied books so much that I am afraid your poor father'll starve."

Jolette was not so very old, perhaps forty, of rather mixed Indian and negro extraction, quite tattooed by the Indians. She had come up from Vincennes some years before, and had three children, who were bound out in various families.

"She'll do for the present," said father. "But I'd like to have some nice kind of white woman who could be motherly, and know what was fitting for a girl."

Father kept a boy now, a rather loutish young lad, just the kind to do the rough work, chop wood and feed the stock. Andy always came for me with a lantern

if I was out in the evening where the Hayne boys could not see me home.

All the fall I had one happy thought in my mind—Norman would be home when the winter broke up. They had gone to New York, and were to visit Washington. Mr. Le Moyne was deeply interested in some trade relations that he expected to lay before the governing powers at Washington. Norman was delighted. To see the President and both houses of Congress was beyond his wildest dream.

There was quite a merry making at Christmas. March or before, Norman had said. And now what with railroads coming to the fore and stage coaches, journeys were more readily made, and letters reached one oftener.

Then came the heart-breaking tidings. A long letter beginning so bravely. New York had proved very interesting with its landmarks of earlier times and its peculiar location. Washington had still many signs of newness. It had not grown by accretion, but been planned at once, and all the plans had not been executed as yet. But the capital and the White House were superb. And the great squares that were to be embellished in the future, the historic points, the adornments progressing slowly, the Senate Chamber and House of Representatives, and the great men of that day were vividly described.

And then the change in all Norman's plans, the parting for years instead of the happy meeting.

Mr. Le Moyne was going to France, charged with some quite important and extensive trade matters that

he understood thoroughly, and that might lead to advantageous relations. That was sort of *sub rosa* not to be generally announced. An intelligent secretary might perhaps do the work, but Mr. Le Moyne needed more than this. His eyesight was failing fast with some obscure trouble that did not in the least affect their appearance. He had written to an eminent surgeon at Paris, who held out some hope of help. At New York the leading doctors had said there was no possibility of arresting total blindness. Mr. Le Moyne was still in the prime of middle life, and this verdict was appalling.

And now he really could not do without Norman. They were like father and son. He was an excellent French scholar, and had also taken up Latin. He read to Mr. Le Moyne, wrote his letters, accompanied him everywhere. "I watch all that goes on as well as read the papers daily, and am really eyes to him. He is sensitive on the point and scarcely acknowledges his misfortune, but you can see how very dependent he must be on some one. And he has trained me to his habits and methods. He has the loveliest and most sincere nature, his friendship is the greatest boon a young fellow can have. I should be an ingrate to leave him now when he has pleaded for me to stay. It is not altogether for the advantages, though they are many, but my sympathies go out to him in the strongest manner. I could not refuse, although I longed to fly back to you all. And it is the uncertainty that pains me most. It may be a year—it may be—I dare not think. But he likes America, and expects to return even if the

worst happens. I have had a delightful time—it would take weeks to recount the pleasures and satisfactions. If I could only see you for an hour. Are you still a little girl? I cannot think of you as being large, as ever being what people call grown up. Oh, keep little until I come back, which must be in another year or two."

I could not talk it over at first. I was glad when father came in that he was in a great hurry to go to some meeting, where they were considering measures to be put into execution for the benefit of the city as soon as spring opened, of broadening the river to give it a better current, of building new wharves and bridges. Improvement seemed to be the watchword everywhere. I listened with a thankful heart. I was so glad not to have him ask about a letter as he had several times of late. So I brushed his coat and pulled his stock around straight, and found him a clean hand-kerchief. Then I went to bed with my sorrow, telling Jolette I had a headache, and could see no one. Homer came over—I heard his voice.

I re-read my letter the next morning. It was dull and gray, with now and then little spits of snow, too cold to snow, pedestrians said one to another. Jolette's great comfort was smoking a pipe in the chimney corner. Sometimes I quite longed for M'liss's inconsequent talk, but I was glad to be alone to-day.

About mid-afternoon Mrs. Hayne came over.

"You poor child!" she cried. "Are you ill?"

The tears rushed to my eyes.

"Oh, Ruth, dear, don't take it so hard. I was

afeared you would. The people who go away are always more to us than we are to them in their new lives. But this is such a splendid thing that we oughtn't grudge him the chance. It's a thousand pities for Mr. Le Moyne, of course, and dreadful to be blind, but just think of all the advantages. Seeing the President, and actually going to a levee—did he tell you?—and wearing a tail coat—the old fashions coming round. I wonder if they have brass buttons! My gran'ther had. Why, I never s'posed a son of mine would be there or go to Paris! And you can't tell but what one of the boys will be President!"

She laughed gayly at the conceit.

"Then the salary! Of course people are making money here, but seem's to me property's up one day and down the next. Chris got out his map, and we looked up Paris. It's hundreds of years old, but my! France can't begin with the United States, though we're not half settled. And it's a great thing! They'll go to England, too, and he will see kings and queens and high dukes. Why, I think it's just grand. Only I hope he won't forget us all or get up to such a degree he will never want to come back."

"Oh, he can't do that! He can't forget us!" I cried with a rending pang at my heart.

"Well, not exactly that, but don't you see, Ruth, that his life is going to be altogether different from ours? Of course you can't understand how a mother feels. She is glad to have her sons prosper, improve, even if it does take them away from her. She gets old and dies, and they have their new lives to live, so it is

all right. Betty Collins's son married a girl whose father owned miles and miles of live oak timber, and they've made a fortune somewhere in the Carolinas. She's a great lady and wears velvet gowns and some kind of lace that was forty dollars a yard—think of it! And how she'd look setting foot in this muddy old Chicago. It's good enough for us who live here right straight along, but for ladies!"

She threw back her head and laughed. She was not at all dismayed, rather elated.

Well, it was a fine opportunity. And then to be held in such high esteem!

"How are you getting along with your black woman? And your new rooms! Husband's talking of building, our house is old, and we're crowded, and no mistake. I do wish Dan would see some nice girl out there," nodding her head, "and marry her. Homer's counting on getting married when he's twenty-one, but I tell him to get his cage first. Birds are easily captured. Homer's nice and steady, and he's saving, too. He will make a first-class husband. I have my eye on a girl for Ben," and her smile brought a warm color to my cheek.

"I hear your father's taking great interest in all the goings on. They talked high in '37. Why, you'd think the earth would be so full of people there'd hardly be standing room, and there's all to the Mississippi River. Not but what the town wants clearing up bad, but we don't want another panic."

She had been knitting as she talked. I liked to hear the rattle of her needles, they kept such exact time.

"Would you mind reading your letter? You're doing nothing, I observe."

I went in the other room and laid out the page that had the most tenderness and longing in it.

"Yes, yes," she subjoined in a pause. "It's pretty much the same as mine, only those things about books and his learning Latin, I don't sense that," was her comment.

"Twould be awful if that nice man should go blind. Then I s'pose Norman would think to stay with him as long as he lived. Well, he will have a good time, no doubt, and we mustn't murmur s'long as he's prosperous. And he may pick up some nice girl. Goodness me! Look at that snow! I must trot off home. Come over, we miss you so much. And don't feel too disappointed about Norman. I'd counted on seeing him sure."

She put up her knitting and bustled about, tied her ears up with her woollen hood, and set off cheerily. Yes, we were in for a storm, the flakes were like a great army sweeping over the land. But it was splendid! There was no wind to hurry them, they could take their time and be beautiful.

## CHAPTER XI

### A TIME FOR LOVE

EVERYBODY rejoiced in Norman Hayne's good fortune. There was another point in it that sent a pang through my heart. Would he outgrow and forget?

Another friend went out of my small circle in the spring, Mrs. Chadwick. Her husband had established a business in Buffalo, and they moved thither. I did not realize then the valuable friend I had lost. I was more interested in the young girls' good time. Homer Hayne was always ready to escort Sophie and myself to the little parties and merrymakings. Just now Dan had one of his periodic fancies for Polly Morrison, and his mother was much troubled about it.

"But if they love each other?" I said. It really seemed to me that they must, and now I had begun to speculate a little on this mysterious power.

"Child," she replied almost sternly, "that kind of off and on business isn't love at all, and the great question is whether they can spend a life together, and take up all the cares and perplexities and help each other along, steady them, comfort them, tide over the rough places

that come in all lives. It isn't all dancing and driving about with a fast horse or careerin' over the prairies, racing like mad. I don't believe Polly knows how to do a single useful thing. Her old grandmother's always been one of the high and mighty ones, and danced with two or three of the Presidents. Maybe they were big people in Maryland, and she gets some money twice a year from her people there. They've just got that house and garden. Morrison was a nice kind of man, but then he died, and Mis' Morrison just slaves herself to death taking care of that queer old crittur that doesn't look like any sort of human being now. I hope to goodness I'll never live to look like that, as if the crows had picked me, an' eyes like two burnt holes in a blanket."

Mrs. Hayne paused, all out of breath. I couldn't imagine her ever looking like Granny Verrinder. Mrs. Morrison did not resemble her mother in the least, though she must have been past both youth and beauty when she was married. How they had come to drift to this place might have puzzled people curious about their neighbors' antecedents. Polly had been born here. From grandmother's early years to Mrs. Morrison's marriage there seemed a hiatus about which they never talked. Mrs. Morrison was a meek, quiet, hard-working woman. I think now she could never have known what to do with Polly, but whatever she did granny traversed. She, the elder, quarrelled with the girl, and yet she adored her and brought out her old finery to adorn the madcap for the dances and merry-makings. But Polly held her head as high in her blue

homespun gowns. The good time was all to her no matter if it was in a log cabin with a black fiddler.

"The kind of wife Dan wants is a good, modest girl of strong principles who can keep a clean, cheerful home and cook well. Poor feeding has ruined many a man, and children are his salvation. I hope Dan's wife will have a houseful. You see, a man begins to think about the future when there's sons to grow up. I've always wanted one girl, but Hayne was mighty fond of boys and that sort of 'leviated things. But I do hope and pray that with all their wives there'll be one I can take to my heart like an own daughter."

The little house of the Morrisons had only two rooms and a lean-to kitchen. The front was grandmother's, and had a carved high-post bedstead with faded silk curtains from the tester poles. There was a curious chest of drawers with a kind of cabinet that had glass doors. Behind these were china and silver that did betoken former grandeur. Granny drank from the cups and took her sugar out of the silver bowl, her milk from the silver cream jug. In pleasant weather she sat out of doors a good deal in a great chair stuffed around with pillows. It had rollers, and when the street was passable she would sometimes be pushed up and down by her daughter, who was a veritable slave. A little shrivelled up old woman with a long nose and a sharp chin, but her still fine teeth would always keep them from meeting. She wore a cap and a false front of faded black, and was bundled up in shawls. Her stick kept away curious children. I think they felt there was something uncanny about

her. People had ceased to cultivate them, if they ever had, but Polly was welcome for her fun and brightness.

I had noticed and Mrs. Chadwick had spoken of a great improvement in the town. Education had really begun to educate. Provincialisms, elisions, and what father had called outlandish talking was falling into disuse. Of course, families coming from different States had brought in accents, pronunciations and adages, some bright and to the point, it must be confessed, but these were being toned down and refined. I had been a good deal amused at the manner in which Ben had corrected his mother, and she had protested with the tart rejoinder, "that her talk was plenty good enough for her, and she didn't expect to put on French airs at her time of life," but she did take more pains.

Once she said, "Dear me! We shall all have to spruce up when Norme comes back so he wont be ashamed of us. I think father'll get the new house also."

"Norme!" How dear the old boyish nickname sounded.

I was just past fifteen when the real things began to happen to me. The year had been very pleasant, and I rather reluctantly did my hair up high and wore a bonnet for Sunday best, and a long skirt—not very long either—what they would have been like trailing over dust and mud! Father was prospering, raising wheat and pigs and corn and buying up a bit of property or acres of prairie land. Jolette and I managed very well. Mrs. Hayne occasionally suggested that girls of fifteen ought to be able to keep house, but now

we had two cows and a great flock of poultry. Jolette made fine butter, and our eggs found a ready sale. Even at that time we sent some across the lake, for now vessels were coming and going continually, except in extreme weather.

"I was married when I was sixteen and did my washing and scrubbing and cooking. But such hands as those don't look like near kin to a washboard;" and she caught mine in hers so large and strong.

They *were* slim and small. We had not begun to cultivate points of aristocracy in that early period, or talk of claims to good birth, but I had often noted that father's hands were small and shapely for all his hard work, though I am not sure but he managed to get the hardest and roughest out of other people.

We heard at intervals from Norman, who was busy and full of enjoyment. Paris was wonderful. The new physician had at first given Mr. Le Moyne a good deal of hope, except that the treatment could not be rapid. Then had intervened a really serious illness, and during this time the optic nerve of one eye had been paralyzed. After that a winter in Spain, which was enchanting.

"I am afraid I see many years of exile before me," Norman wrote in my letter. "What can I do? Mr. Le Moyne is the most delightful, the sincerest and certainly the most generous of friends. Through his convalescence he has said so many times, 'What could I do without you, Norman, when I have no son or nephew even?' He has one sister, who is an invalid from a broken hip and partial paralysis, and her

daughter is a fashionable and titled lady. He is very fond of travelling and enjoys society, but now he needs some one continually. I know he fears he will be blind, and he wants to be sure of a permanent stay and solace. Can I relinquish some of the best hopes of my life—yet I feel that I ought. It seems as if God had given me this work to do, that it was not of my own seeking, and I must trust Him to make it right in the end. It is very hard, but must I not go on in this straight path? Pray that I may have strength, little girl. If I could not see it so clearly, but I do, and whatever may be said, remember that I would rather come home without a dollar and trust for a welcome than remain away years and reap a fortune."

But I thought even years, five or seven, would not be so very long.

We had been down to the Piagets—Homer and I. Mrs. Piaget was like a girl in her merry ways. We had some guessing of proverbs and songs, a cup of tea and cake, both very plain, but with the fun and frolic most enjoyable. Just as we were saying good-night we crossed hands, Sophie, Homer, Luther Chandler and I.

"Oh, a wedding, a wedding!" cried Nanette, and we all blushed and laughed. "Sophie is the eldest, it is her turn first."

Luther was very sweet on Sophie, but I thought she did not care much for him.

Then Homer and I walked home.

"It's late, but I'm coming in," he exclaimed, and the resolution in his voice roused me curiously.

Jolette was in her chimney corner. During the cold weather she rolled herself in a blanket and slept on the old settle.

"Ye'r pop's gone to bed," she said with a sort of grunt.

We went through to the keeping room. She had mended the fire, and it was now blazing cheerfully. Oddly enough, two chairs stood invitingly before it, but I knew father did not like company staying late. It seemed unsocial not to ask him to sit down.

"You make a room look different from any one else, Ruth," he said, glancing around. "There is always an air about it as if one really lived on a little higher plane. Who would think of placing those pine boughs in the corner, and having pictures and books around, and always the newspaper and little knicknacks and your work basket, and those pine cones with grass growing in them," as his eyes wandered around.

"Was that what you came in to say?" I asked saucily, for it amused me.

"No, it wasn't." He looked at the fire a moment, then at me. I had both hands on the back of my low sewing chair.

"Ruth, will you marry me? Could you love me well enough to be my wife?"

I do not think the question took me quite by surprise. Mrs. Hayne had made suggestions. Father had indulged in a few comments such as "that he meant to give Homer his walking papers—it was too soon for any fellows to be hanging round." But we had been such good friends, without a bit of sentiment, as if a

girl of fifteen could understand what sentiment truly was!

"Oh, Homer!" My voice almost failed in the great tremble of every nerve. "Oh, what made you ask it?"

"Because I wanted to know. Surely, Ruth, you will tell me the truth, the whole truth. I've always been fond of you, and it seems as if Norme left you to us when he went away. You were only a little girl, and he has companied so much with high and mighty folks that I suppose he will be miles and miles above anybody here. But mother's heart is set upon you, and she's nagged me lately, as if she thought I wasn't—well, forward enough. We're all fond of you, you know. If you could—only I'm afraid—" hesitatingly, "that you *don't* love me. A girl always shows it a little. We seem just good friends—"

"Oh, that is all we are, Homer!" I cried, but my face was scarlet with blushes, and my heart gave a great throb of thankfulness. For I knew by some sure insight, girl that I was, that he had no best of all love to give me.

Then he reached over and took my hand.

"I think I could love you dearly, and oh, little Ruth, I'd carry you in my arms or let you walk over me, and spend my whole life thinking how I could make you happy. I'd work day and night that you should have the things you enjoyed. All that would be nothing if you did not love me."

"Yes, yes, you understand. And so let us keep friends. I think there is some one who could love you

very dearly, who would be glad of your love, and you would be very happy. I think you are saved for that."

He turned scarlet first, then deadly pale. "Sophie," he murmured just under his breath.

"Yes, it is Sophie. Homer, I have been hoping this long while——"

"Mother would never forgive me if I passed you by," he interrupted. "You see, I had to ask you. And if you had said yes I should have bent every energy toward making you happy. Yes, I would have done it. But you're not quite—not like——"

"Not in love," I said smilingly. "That makes everything easy, levels all inequalities, I have read somewhere. Then I am still a little girl. I didn't want to be grown up. I don't want any real lovers this long, long while. And I shall be so glad for Sophie. She's seventeen and just the right age, and so dear, and sweet, and wise, and such a splendid housekeeper! Oh, you will be so happy, and she will just run over with joy."

"What I wanted to say, though I do not know as I can put it in the right words, is that you are not quite like other girls. You're like a choice china cup, while the every-day earthen wouldn't mind the dishwater so much, you see," and he laughed. "Ben understands. He said it wouldn't be fair, that you ought to have a gentleman who loved books and cultivation, and all that. And though I hope I'll be well-to-do some day, I shouldn't ever care for the fancy things. Still I wouldn't grudge them to the woman I loved. And you ought to have the best—which isn't always money either."

I didn't want to hear about myself, though I knew then there was a great gulf between Homer and me that only love could bridge over. Yet I did love him dearly at that moment.

"And Sophie?" I interposed.

"It's queer, isn't it? And they say girls are always jealous of each other. Ruth, you are the sweetest little thing in the world. If Sophie didn't love you, I don't know as I could ask her. And I shall tell her just how it was. Of course, mother—she must know, too, that I asked you. I like everything open and above board. And I guess the sign will come right—that crossing of hands," smiling.

"And you'll ask her soon? I want her to be happy." I know my face was all eagerness.

"You may trust me for that."

The clock struck eleven.

"Ruth!" exclaimed a peremptory voice.

"Yes, sir." Children said sir and ma'am in those days long after they were grown up.

We went through the old kitchen. Jolette was snoring, but covered up head and ears, and the embers covered over likewise. I let Homer out and fastened the door. Then I went back to father. He was leaning on one elbow, his head tousled and his eyes almost fierce, but I did not mind.

"Was that Homer Hayne making a night of it?"

"Yes, father," and I couldn't help a mirthful sound.

"Did he ask you to marry him—the truth, child."

"Yes," and I could not forbear laughing. "But he

is in love with Sophie Piaget, only his mother wanted him to—to—”

Then father laughed and gave me a hug.

“Yes, I knew that was in the air, but I thought I’d head it off. Sophie! Well, she will make just the right sort of wife for him. Ruth, chickabiddy, you’re too young to get tangled up in such things. You’re not to have any lovers for years yet. Do you hear?”

“Oh, father, I don’t want any. I couldn’t be any happier if I had a dozen.”

“A dozen! I hope it will never come to that. Not even one in ever so long. There, little girl, give me a good-night kiss and go to bed.”

He held me in his arms for some seconds. Perhaps it wasn’t the fashion in those days, but people were not generally effusive.

It rained the next day. I spun with a light heart, looked after my hens and then knotted some fringe for my curtains in a pretty way Sophie had taught me. Father read the paper aloud. There was an Indian war in Florida now, and some important political questions discussed in a rather heated manner.

I really wanted to run down to the Piagets, the next morning, but I resolutely refused myself. It was clear and cold. Jolette made mince pies. Father had brought the love of pie from his native State. What an appetizing fragrance they diffused.

About mid afternoon I caught sight of Sophie slipping about the frozen path full of hummocks, but she balanced herself with a fascinating art. I ran to the door.

"Oh, I wanted to see you so, I hoped you would come. Of course you know. I am the happiest girl in all Chicago! But if you had loved him—and often I thought he loved you, and I stood no chance. I wouldn't let mother speak—that is the French fashion, you know—I was so afraid he might be affronted. Luther had asked mother's permission, and she thought it was time I was betrothed. But I couldn't make up my mind to that. I've been gay and full of fun, but sometimes my heart ached for very dread. Only you are such a child!"

"Why, yes, it was ridiculous."

"But Mrs. Hayne loves you so. You'd do worlds better for Ben."

"I don't want to do for anybody."

"But Ben isn't grown up."

"And there's Chris, if Ben won't have me," I said, with a sense of amusement at being handed down. "And you understand—Homer asked me to please his mother. Of course he likes me, but that isn't marrying love."

"Yes, you are going to be the dearest little sister to us. Oh, I do wonder if Mrs. Hayne will truly like me?"

"Yes, she will when she comes to know you well. She has hoped so that Dan would marry, only she didn't want Polly Morrison."

"And now they're at it again. This time everybody thinks it will make a match. I don't like Dan. He's the great Mogul, and he flirts awfully. I wouldn't be his wife for half Chicago. But Homer is so sweet and

patient and tender. He has some of your ways," smiling generously, "and he will build his house at once. Oh, won't it be just splendid! I shall go to work immediately. What a delight it must be to make up one's trousseau. I have yards and yards of lace knit, and fringe made. I shall not sell any more. Oh, Ruth," studying me intently, "are you quite sure you are happy over it? For you could have taken him—and I don't see how you escaped loving him."

"Then you would have been unhappy. Now we are both happy and content."

I came to know afterward that there were women who fancied you were dying for their particular lover, and it vexed me, and men who thought your world could easily have been bounded by them.

I made Sophie stay to supper. Homer was not coming that evening. He wanted to explain to his parents and make some arrangements. Father wished her all good fortune and teased her a little, admitting that she would have one of the best of husbands.

I hesitated to make my weekly visit to Mrs. Hayne, and the day I set it stormed. But I walked over with Ben and Chris after Sunday School.

"You naughty girl," Mrs. Hayne began. "I don't know when I can forgive you. I suppose you *were* ashamed."

"What did she do?" asked Chris, eager eyed.

"Oh, she knows. There, you two boys, run off. I want to talk to her and I don't want you catching gabble seed."

They went reluctantly.

"I hoped he'd wait for you, he would have been young enough then, and a chit like you don't know her mind, though many a girl has been married at fifteen. Sophie Piaget is a nice enough girl, industrious and all that, but he might have looked higher. I don't quite like the French of it, and the Catholic, though I'm not bigoted. I never supposed you were helping things along, or I'd put my finger in the pie sooner."

Had I helped it along? I had a guilty feeling.

"Father wouldn't hear to my being engaged or having a real lover," I said with some dignity. "And—I don't want one, I don't care about being married."

"You'll sing another tune presently. Though after all," in a softer tone, "there is plenty of time."

## CHAPTER XII

### NOT MERRY, BUT WEDDING BELLS.

MRS. HAYNE did not feel comfortable over Homer's engagement. It was a full fortnight before she could make a formal call on Mrs. Piaget. She had been there on errands, and Sophie and I were often at the Haynes'. But she stopped for me one day, "since it had to be done," she said, and we walked down together. She was not at her best, though she had on her Sunday clothes. Perhaps she would have felt more at ease in her every-day ones. She was generally so cordial and heartsome that I noticed and felt sorry for the stiffness.

Of course she said some pleasant things—that she knew Sophie would make a good, industrious wife, and that was what young men needed. She had no patience with flyaways, and girls who were too good to work, who were taking up the new ideas that you must sit in the parlor and play on the piano, and have lace undersleeves dangling about your wrists, and a tail to your frock to sweep up the dirt everywhere. Clothes, she took it, were made for use and comfort.

Women were wearing very full skirts, and all around the back they "dipped" and had to be held up in the streets. Sleeves were wide and flowing with lace or fine muslin ruffles inside. Some had an edge of needle-work, but if that came from the convents in Canada it was costly, and the younger girls were doing it for themselves. They took their work along when they went to make calls, and calls then were an hour or so long between friends, and you "laid off your things."

There was coming to be quite a circle of what was considered afterward "the first people," and who had streets named for them. There were the Newberrys and Owenses, the Hamiltons and Pecks and Roberts, the Menards and Nobles, and Baubains and Kinzies, who seemed the fathers of the town, and talked of the block house and the few cabins around it, the attack on the fort, and the Indian skirmishes. When you listened to them Chicago seemed really old.

Then there was only one set, with the clergymen having the place of honor. Now there were several circles, not strongly defined, and living in amity, but each one choosing its own friends. The cream went out shopping when the new goods came in, and no longer wore homespun. Their sons and daughters went away for the finishing touches in education.

The Haynes were then in what we should call the middle class. There were some fine French people, but they seemed a little colony to themselves, as well as the Germans. I liked all the French people I had met very much, perhaps I was drawn to them by the

thought of Norman in Paris. I did admire their courtesy and a certain dainty politeness as if they always knew just the right thing to do, and did it graciously.

Mrs. Piaget brought out her best cake and wine. She had some fine embroidered napkins, others done in exquisite drawn work, and her glasses were clear and fine, letting the tint of the wine shine through. And the cake was delicious. She always flavored it. She had the art of making flavors and scents, and their clothing had an indescribable fragrance.

"Well, well," Mrs. Hayne said, when we had left the house, "that's done with, and I've been dreading it. Sophie will make a nice wife, I dare say, but I think Homer could have found some good American girl. There's Kate and Annie Noble. They always ask him to their gatherings, and Mr. Noble said to father that he was a smart, level-headed fellow, and would make his mark. I've been counting on my boys marrying, and I've wanted some one I could company with and feel to like as an own daughter."

"But Sophie is very sweet and affectionate," I ventured.

"She's French. The old saying is that 'blood's thicker 'n water.' And she'll have her ways, and her friends, and they'll jabber that everlasting tongue that you can't make head nor tail of until you wish there hadn't been any Tower of Babel, and everybody had gone on talking the same language."

I laughed at that. How queer it must have seemed when no one understood any one else!

"And I s'pose Norman will come home with some fine French body who can't comb her hair nor put on her stockings nor shoes, and must have a maid, as old Granny Verrinder talks about. What better off is she for all the fuss! Granny Pettingill is eighty, and she can spin on the big wheel, and knit and sew, and is worth a dozen of that other old thing, that's wearing out her daughter's life. I don't know what you'd do with a dozen. I'd bundle 'em up in a bag an' drop 'em in the lake."

Mother Hayne was forgetting Ben's training, and dropping back into her elisions, which showed that she was rather short in the temper.

I was truly sorry about it all. Yet I could not wish it different. And when Sophie ran over in the edge of the evening I tried to comfort her.

"She doesn't like me, I can see that," she said with a catch in her breath that was like a sob. "And I feel so sorry for Homer. He has counted on our all being so happy together, and I would try to be like a true daughter, only she is so stiff I shall always feel afraid."

"I think she will get over it. She has such a good warm heart. I'm quite sure it will get settled by the time you are ready to be married," I said hopefully. I couldn't imagine Mrs. Hayne holding out.

"We're going to have a betrothal party. Mother was waiting for her call to settle that, and Mr. Hayne has given Homer a lot. It's almost out on the prairie, but if the Wrights don't mind living there we oughtn't. We've been planning it—he's going to build two rooms quite to the middle of the lot, and when he gets fore-

handed, as you Americans say, he will put up a nice front."

Father thought that an excellent idea. Homer came and talked it over with him, and I think he was much pleased.

Then there was the betrothal party. They had a new priest now at St. Mary's—Father Fischer, and he was very gracious and kindly. The ceremony seemed as solemn as a marriage to me. But it was true that most of the guests were French. I was beginning to talk quite well, and felt really at home among them.

"I don't know what we should do without you," Homer said, squeezing my hand. "You must coax up mother, and we will try to do our best. Sophie's the one girl in the world to me, and yet I love you just the same. But the sweetest of all is having the girl glad to come to you."

After Père Fischer had given them a second blessing and gone, with some of the elders, old Billy Griffin came in with his violin, and we had some dancing, with plenty of cake and a kind of cordial made out of spiced fruits, that was quite harmless.

Dan had come in and seemed a good deal interested. I danced with him, but Sophie said it was long and short division. I was still growing and almost as tall as Sophie.

After that we began to plan for the wedding outfit. The night of her betrothal Mrs. Piaget had given Sophie her string of gold beads. She had one of not very choice pearls, but pretty, I thought, which would be Nanette's, six of her silver teaspoons, three table-

spoons with the mark of a Paris silversmith on them, and some quaint china dishes, as well as a fine pewter basin. Then there was a cream silk gown with dainty flowers sprinkled over it, some of her mother's youthful finery, that would be made over into the wedding gown.

As for sheets and blankets and table linen, they were to be evolved somehow, and pretty underwear, so dear to a girl's heart. There was still a scarcity of money about, and so one had to exercise one's wits.

The town was thrown into quite a ferment that entirely eclipsed our simple engagement. A Frenchman, one Pierre Maseurier, had been up to Chicago some weeks. He was much interested in the canal and trade generally, and had a large place at Vincennes, as well as some sugar interests in Louisiana. Small, old, but sharp and eager, as if he were just beginning life, instead of having it more than half spent. What brought him into contact with Granny Verrinder no one could explain, but he was quite a frequent caller. Suddenly the little town was astonished at another betrothal. Whether Polly Morrison had captured him, a widower of long standing, with two married sons, or whether he had tempted her with the brilliant prospect, no one could tell. She curtly dismissed her old admirers, there was an elaborate wedding gown sent for, and Polly, dressed in sumptuous furs and covered with a white wolf robe, was driven about as if she were a queen.

Two days after a night's debauch, Dan Hayne left for Buffalo. He knocked down a friend who offered

him a teasing condolence, but vouchsafed no explanation to any one. Then there was a wedding at St. Mary's, with a nuptial mass and all the accessories of state. Bishop Quartier came up to marry them, and the lovely Saint Pailais, who was afterward Bishop of Vincennes. It was a grand affair, and it seemed as if the whole town turned out. Polly looked as handsome as if she had just stepped out of a picture, and most people wondered afterward, for she had never been considered a beauty.

Mrs. Hayne felt so much relieved that she began to take a warmer interest in Sophie and the new house. There were other mothers who gave thanks, no doubt, for wild, wilful Polly had been a terror to them. First it was one lover sighing at her feet and then another. She certainly did delight in using her wiles on other girls' lovers, not that she wanted the admirers either, but just to try her power. There was only one man who won her heart as I came to know afterward, but money and position outweighed love.

Of course she had taken M. Maseurier for the luxury he could give her. No girl of eighteen would be likely to marry a wizened-up old man past sixty if he were poor. Everybody settled to that.

About six weeks afterward Granny Verrinder died very suddenly, though she was past ninety-six. She had been taken to her granddaughter's marriage, lifted in and out of a coach, and so bundled up that no one saw much of her except two staring black eyes. It was supposed Mrs. Morrison would rejoin her daughter, but whether granny had more money than any one

thought, or that the wealthy son-in-law had made provision for her, no one was quite certain. She repaired and renovated her house, built on another room, distributed the furniture around more comfortably, took in an old negro woman, and though she did not enlarge the borders of her friendship, she came to look less careworn, went to church occasionally, and perhaps found a little happiness. At least, she was exempt from care.

We heard that Polly was living in great style and had everything heart could wish.

Dan came back three or four weeks afterward and went about his business as if nothing had happened, held up his head and was in no wise broken hearted. Indeed, I thought him improved. He took a real interest in Homer's house, advanced him some money, so that he could meet bills promptly, and was pleasant and brotherly to Sophie, who had always felt a little afraid of him.

It was a very delightful spring and early summer to me. Father was prosperous and jolly, and we were so interested in completing the trousseau and house equipment. When one goes out and orders a long list, has them sent home and put in their places, one misses the delight and interest of real home-making.

Then, the wedding day was set. It would be in the church, of course, and that did fret Mrs. Hayne. There was no great fuss about mixed marriages then, though good Père Fischer turned in his pleasant manner that sometime Homer would be numbered among those of the true faith.

Nanette and I were bridesmaids. I had a sheer white muslin frock and a wide white satin sash that came down to the very bottom of the skirt. There were no picture hats, but we each wore a wreath, and Sophie her mother's wedding veil, that then was folded up and laid away in a box for Nanette, who was free to have lovers now.

The wedding was at noon, and Mrs. Hayne gave a generous dinner, tables being set in both rooms. Sophie made a sweet and blushing bride, Homer was fine and manly. Dan made the speech of the occasion, and everybody drank to the health of the bride and groom and wished them children and grandchildren.

About mid-afternoon the procession started for home. Dan took Nanette, Ben and me in his two-seat wagon. There was to be an evening company, an "infair," as it was called, in the new house. The bedstead and bedding had been stored in the shed, the two rooms were decorated with vines and flowers and hanging candlesticks and lamps, so that in the evening the lights would be in no one's way.

Randolph Street was a lane then with but few houses, and out beyond stretched the prairie that was to be a compact city long before the century ended.

"Oh, I do hope you won't be lonesome way out here," I said to Sophie.

"Why, I shall have Homer, you know," opening her eyes wide as if she thought my wish inconsequent.

"But not in the daytime."

"Then I shall be busy about my work."

"Why I thought we had done sewing enough to last seven years," I said gayly.

"Well—there will be cooking for a hungry man, and I don't mean that Homer shall wish for his mother when meal time comes. And Mr. Hayne thinks it will be a good thing for Homer to bring his shop over here. Chicago is building up so fast, and it will have to stretch out every way. Then a good deal of the time he will be home to dinner. You and Nan and the girls will visit me—oh no, I shall not be lonesome."

She was so happy. And though it had not the brightest beginning, Mother Hayne came to take great comfort in her daughter.

We had a merry time with some new plays and dancing. Mr. Hayne took several of the older people home, then his wife, Nanette and myself.

"Well, they've had a very nice time and started fair, and they'll get along all right," said the satisfied motherly voice.

"Homer has a long head. I shan't have made a fortune, but I look for my sons to be some of the rich men of Chicago. Dan knows how to make money, and if he learns how to keep it, he'll be all right. I dare say that blind Frenchman will do well by Norman, and Ben's steady going. I shouldn't wonder if Chris turned parson," and he laughed.

"Dan's like his old self," returned Mrs. Hayne. "I don't know when I've set so much store by him as I have this last week. That girl was a sort of a witch, I do believe, and she just upset every man that she set her eyes on. There's 'Lias Gordon gone to the dogs,

hasn't drawn a sober breath since her wedding day. 'Twas said she promised to marry him, but I don't believe that. She was looking for the best chance. And I don't just see how all this good luck came to her. But she'll have to carry herself mighty straight, or that old fellow will beat her, you could see it in his eye, and 'twould serve her just right. I give thanks, like good old David, seven times a day that she's out of Dan's way."

I missed Sophie and the excitement, though some new girl friends came in, and Ben was my devoted cavalier. But one night he surprised me by a very naïve confession. Were the Haynes, little and big, bound to own me?

He had been descanting on Homer's happiness, which was ideal, of course.

"The right thing for a man to do is to get married when he reaches a certain place," began Ben gravely. "And I've some plans—I'm going in Hamilton's real estate and law office. They want a clerk. There isn't any more money in it, but I'm going to study law. I've been thinking of it this good while. I've listened to the men talking politics, and I'm awfully interested in that smart Stephen A. Douglas. Ruth, this is going to be a great country, and it will need more and more people to govern it. A State can have only two senators, but as her population increases she has more representatives, and that takes a man to Washington. Then there are judges and governors of States."

"And Presidents," I laughed.

"Only one every four years. Seems to me they tie his hands behind his back, and then grumble because he doesn't pull up every weed. He doesn't have so much power, after all. But I'd like to be in public life somewhere, to work on the souls or beliefs of men. It's a grand thing!"

"Oh, Ben!" I was amazed. Quiet, apparently contented Ben!

"Yes, I'm going to set out for that. If you don't put up a mark you can't help shooting at random. Of course it will take a long while and hard study, but one reason why I like you so much is that you're fond of books, and have more real sense than most girls. And, Ruth, you could be a perfect lady. It's born in some people, and when it isn't they never get quite up to the mark."

"Oh, thank you," I returned, amused, as he made a little pause. "On what pedestal am I to be put?"

I had no idea of what he would say, and somehow I was not a little bewildered by his ambitious projects.

"Well, when I get up to the place where I can care for a wife, I want you. You would read and study and talk with a fellow, and keep him up to the mark, too. I was glad you didn't want to marry Homer, not but what he will make a splendid, devoted husband, but house and wife and children will be his boundaries. He will vote the Democratic ticket because his father did, not from any principle or conviction. Oh, do you remember how you and Norman once quarrelled about politics?" and he laughed.

"But, Ben—I—"

He made a gesture with his hand, and I never understood before how much fine dignity Ben possessed.

"After all this, if you haven't really fallen in love with any one else, I shall ask you. But if you do meet with any one you prefer this must not stand in the way. I don't believe you will be the kind of girl who is always reaching out after lovers. Your father will want to keep you."

"Oh, that is it," I interrupted. "Father has forbidden my having any lovers for a long while yet."

"We will be friends just as we have been. I'll come and talk over my plans with you. Mother, you see, wouldn't understand. I like your father's bright, trenchant remarks, too. There's some width to his brain. But all the other will be put off until the right time comes—laid away on the shelf of the future, not to be meddled with. And now if father scolds about my throwing up a good business chance, you will understand why I do it."

I could not have helped admiring Ben. He had such a good, strong face. All the boys were well looking, none as handsome as Dan, but it seemed to me later on in life as if each to a certain degree carried his character in his face.

"So now we have had a good talk," continued Ben—he had done all the talking—"and we understand the ground we go upon. You know you are the dearest girl to all of us. I shall never forget the night you came. And we will be the best of friends."

Could I refuse when the tender eyes looked up so confidently?

"The best of friends," I returned, and I felt the solemnity of my own voice.

It was true that Ben's new plans were rather frowned upon. His employer was sorry to lose him.

"There's lots of money made in speculation," said Mr. Hayne, "and lots lost as well. Stands to reason values can't always increase, and immigrants can't always come in. We have a big country, with other lakes and rivers, and the whole Atlantic coast for shipping. Then it seems rather shifty business to me for steady company."

Ben did not mind, however. There were some new and exciting questions to greet the new President and his Cabinet. The boundary of Oregon and British America almost stirred up warfare, and a new difficulty loomed up when the State of Texas, an independent principality, asked to enter the Union. Mexico objected, and there was a talk of war. We had many things on hand, streets and the muddy old river, and at last the canal that was going to do so much for us approaching completion. Every year a greater demand for wheat and corn and live stock. Father added field to field, it seemed a passion with him.

The next spring there came a little girl to Homer and Sophie Hayne. I think Mrs. Hayne was the gladdest of all. The little girl of her own blood that she had so longed for. A sweet, good little thing who seldom cried and smiled readily.

They were all prosperous. Homer began to build houses and sell them. Dan was steady, and turning his attention largely to cattle raising and buying, and

had an interest in packing. He had a room now at the hotel, and seemed to care little for girls, though he was not averse to social pleasures. His one passion was Chita, who was kept beautifully groomed. He raced her now and then. She was the mother of a splendid colt. He used to talk to her as if she was a human being, and I think she understood every word.

As for Mr. Le Moyne, the treatment had failed. Norman had promised to remain with him. They would reside in Paris and travel.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE SHADED SIDE

I WAS having a happy girl's life with friends and pleasures. Nanette Piaget had a lover, a young French Canadian, who became enamored of prairies, and saw boundless possibilities in wheat. He had some money and would settle in Chicago.

One day father was brought home from a bad fall, unconscious; they feared at first that he was dead. I was stunned. Mrs. Piaget came over and one of our neighbors, Mrs. Lewis.

They found his hip was badly broken. Three physicians worked over him, and after some hours he was bandaged. One doctor remained all night, and Mrs. Lewis stayed. She did a good deal of nursing, and made her home with a married daughter.

Fever set in, and there followed six weeks of danger. I don't know what would have happened, but Dan Hayne took charge of the outside matters. The wheat had been cut and was to be brought in, a splendid crop it was.

"Everything grows its best for your father," he said. "This is the first setback he has had."

Everybody was very kind. But I had never known sorrow or anxiety, and the saddest of all was not to do anything that would help. He had to lie still and suffer. In the height of the fever he was strapped to the cot, to keep him from doing any worse injury to his hip. Mrs. Hayne coaxed me to come down and stay a few days, but I had an awful fear that father would die. Or he might come to consciousness and ask for me. Now and then he talked of our journey from the old Bay State, and murmured, "Little girl, little girl," but he did not realize that the little girl was at his side whenever she was allowed to be.

There were a few days when he hovered between life and death and dozed most of the time. Then he opened his eyes and looked at me and said in a tremulous tone, "Ruth."

"Father!" I caught his thin white hand and covered it with kisses and tears.

He drew a long breath. "I've been pretty sick, haven't I? How long has it been—a fortnight?"

"Almost two months."

"Two months! And the wheat—the corn—ruined! And what is the matter with my side? I can't move my leg. Why, I don't understand."

"You were hurt by a fall. You have been very ill with a fever. And now you are better. You are going to get well."

I leaned my head down on his shoulder and cried. I could not help it.

"Poor little girl!" he said. "Poor little girl!"

Then Dr. Carpenter came in, and I know he was greatly relieved.

"But we are not out of the woods!" He shook his head dubiously. "You can blow out your candle very easily, but with care you may burn it to the socket. Still you have had a mighty tight squeeze. And there must be no crying over him," shaking his finger at me.

"Except for joy," I retorted, wiping my eyes.

"I do begin to recall things, but I had no idea I had been ill so long. And my hip—my leg?"

"It was a very bad break. It hasn't gone on as we hoped, the fever was too much for it. But we think it will be all right in the end. It will be a winter's job, and call for a good deal of patience."

Father groaned and covered his face with his hands.

"You may be dismissed, little maid," with a smile and gesture of the hand, "we have some secret rites to perform."

I went out and hugged Jolette in my joy.

"I knowed 'twas all right," said Jolette. "I've harked to dat ar schreech owel an' never yet counted t'ree. T'ree jes' sure sartin', fer a death. An' the candile didn't roll up a windin' sheet in de new of the moon. As fer dogs howlin', you can't depend on dem no mo', 'ceptin dey run right in de sick room."

Mrs. Lewis had stayed with us nearly all the time; making a call now and then at her daughter's. She returned before the doctor went away, and declared that she, too, expected favorable word, for she had seen

a change the last three days. "And if one doesn't drop off sudden, they're sure to pull through."

Dan came in every night and I told him of the comforting verdict.

"I thought he'd pull through. You see, he's wiry, and a steady man, too. Had everything in his favor, but it was a tight squeeze."

"Oh, Dan, you've been so good, so splendid!" and I caught his hand, looking up with tears in my eyes. "I don't know what we should have done without you."

"Remember that some day."

I did not understand the words nor the tone.

The next was Sunday, and many of the neighbors were in. I was not needed, and I went to Sophie's with the good tidings. The baby was so sweet and cunning. There had been quite a time about naming it. They both decided upon Ruth, but there was grandmother, who would have felt hurt if left out. Elise and Elizabeth were so much alike they could compliment both in the same name. So it was Ruth Elizabeth, but Homer always called her Little Girl. What would Chicago be when she was sixteen? Men would be describing old Chicago as they did now. But the log houses would be gone, and the plain brick houses were not picturesque. Would there be any old Fort Dearborn? And some of the Indians had thought it wiser to move further back. The wheat and oats and corn were trenching upon the ground to which they really had no claim. They still had their ball games and their races, the ambition of every young brave was to own a horse. Work for anything else they would not.

The squaws supplied them with clothing. They fished and hunted, but the squaws tilled the fields, did bead work, made curious chains of polished shells, that looked as if they were set with gems. They seemed happy, too, but at middle life they were wrinkled old women.

Saturday afternoon was a gala time. They had games and dances, sometimes such fierce war dances it seemed as if they would scalp each other. There were stringent laws against selling them any quantity of liquor, and the clergymen tried to rouse some moral and intellectual ambition in them, but it was hard work. Were they really the ornamental denizens of the wilderness, and with the passing of that would they disappear?

Homer and Sophie were glad of my good news. I really was in an exultant state. And when Homer took me home we found Ben there, who was delighted and eager.

"I'm so glad," he said afterward, as we stood on the old stoop, that now extended out to the edge of the sidewalk. Father had raised us at least two feet. "I've been thinking what I could do for you, and that I ought to come in often, but I had a splendid chance to learn German, which will take three evenings in a week. And the disturbances in Europe send so many immigrants over here. I don't wonder they love to get to a free land, out of the reach of tyrants, and there is so much to study."

"Oh, Ben," I replied, "don't worry about us. I dare say some one will be in every evening when father is

well enough to talk, and when he can go out a little—”

“It’s you I am thinking about, and if I can be of any service you will surely let me know.”

I promised. How good they all were to me. Does one recall past events more distinctly as one grows older? I could always see myself as father lifted me out of the old wagon, when I was half frightened at such a host of boys.

Father improved very slowly, but his mind was clear, and he had a good hope of being able to get about by spring. I had known that Dan Hayne had been attending to the place, but I was hardly prepared for the accounting he gave father.

“Really, Dan,” and father’s voice was husky with emotion, “things would have gone to the dogs if you had not come to the fore. I don’t know how I will ever get straight with you.”

Dan laughed. He had such a jolly, light-hearted ring in his voice, just like his mother’s.

“It wasn’t such a desperate sight, just to oversee. The men seemed to know how to take hold. Gaynor, I suppose you’re a shrewd, long-headed Yankee, looking at the end, instead of going off half cocked. You have everything dovetailed, and one thing just fits in with another. I’ve learned a lot of things these two months and looked after my own affairs as well. I think you’re about right. Twenty or thirty years from now we’ll be feeding these people of the East, who think they know a little bit more than all the rest.”

“I wasn’t brought up in a slipshod fashion,” returned father dryly. “Though I don’t wonder you

people trust to chance. I never saw such pure luck in my life as there is here—one can't call it anything else."

Father had an excellent appetite and began to feel real well at heart, as he termed it. Homer made him a very convenient chair, that could be raised and lowered by an ingenious crank and a set of pins. But they found when the doctor and Jolette, who was good and strong, stood him up that he had no power at all over the hurt limb—very little feeling in it.

"Are you going to tell me that I must be a one-legged limpy Dick all the rest of my life?" he demanded of the doctor. He was not a profane man usually, but he did swear then.

"Well, we hope not. The joint has not mended as we expected; it isn't sound. It's the worst break a man can have to knock him out, but here it hasn't been quite four months, and the fever was awful. A man who could pull through that can pull through other things. There is some paralysis, but when you come to exercise even that may mend. I think it has improved in a month. I give you a year before I lose heart."

Father groaned, and when he took his hands from his face I saw there were tears in his eyes.

But we made his room cheerful, and he could be pushed about in his chair. Jolette was as good as a masseur, she was so strong and vigorous. The doctor instructed her how to rub him, and some medicaments were used. We had a good fire blazing on the hearth. Neighbors came in and played cards and repeated the

general gossip. Then I read to him. We took the *Democrat* now, and a new paper, the *Journal*, had been started. He liked to hear all sides. Some of the ideas he flatly contradicted, others he called fool talk. He was very fond of arguing. He and Dan had it hot and heavy sometimes, and I was afraid Dan would break off in anger. I used to go to the door with him and say pleadingly:

"Oh, Dan, you won't mind, will you? Remember how ill father has been, and how awfully disappointed he feels at not getting thoroughly well. He doesn't mean all he says, and he would miss you terribly——"

"Don't worry, little one. I can make allowance. Some of it amuses me, too."

Then he took my face in his hands and turned it up a little until our eyes met. His were a deep gray. There was a masterful expression in them that went all through one. He stooped a little and kissed me with what I understood later was the passion of a strong man, and it left me as helpless for a moment as that night of the wild ride.

"Never mind, little dear," he said, and was gone.

"Such a dumb idiotic fool as Dan Hayne is in some things! If I couldn't see an inch before my nose I'd get some sort of a machine and pull it out longer. He's all right on this slavery business—we don't want it here at the North. And the tariff has two sides, I'm free to confess. But some other matters——"

"I wish you wouldn't quarrel so much with him," I interrupted. "And he is so good to us. You and Mr. Harris always get along so nicely."

"Shucks!" snorted father in disdain. "There's no arguing where two people believe just the same things in the same way, or pretend to. I like a man to have some sharp opinions, if he does ram the points into you. It's like a wrestling bout, and stirs up your blood. Dan won't be so sure of things when he is forty."

I felt a little relieved. But the kiss burned upon my lips and brought a curious heat to my cheek.

There was a young paper started about this time by a Mr. Wright, who was always promulgating some scheme for the public good. He was very eager and earnest about public-school education, and the necessity for children, who were to be the future rulers of the State, to know what their duties were, and to be able to undertake them. Many improvements in old Chicago were owing to his fertile brain, and the energy and ability to carry them through.

This particular one that interested father from its first inception was the "*Prairie Farmer*." At the head of it was this motto—"Farmers, write for your paper." All kinds of agricultural questions were asked and answered as correctly as possible for the limited knowledge of that time. Experiences were exchanged—the value of inventions and what might be done by machinery. Some of those old ideas did get appropriated.

Father told me to draw up the table and bring him pen and ink. He often looked over and straightened up accounts. He kept every item and knew the returns of different methods, always adopting the most profitable one.

This kept him busy for a long time. He had a quill pen, and he chewed the end of it, wrinkled up his brow, and shut his lips in a straight line so that you could hardly see the color. Somewhere in the afternoon he asked me to read a rather discouraging article, and then said:

"Now listen to this, and it's no visionary thing either."

He read a very spirited reply. I recognized at once that some of it was his own experience.

"Oh, father!" I cried, delighted, "you wrote it yourself. It's splendid! And you ought to have it printed."

"Good enough for that, eh?" He gave his quizzical smile and twinkled his eyes.

"Oh, yes; can't you have it put in the *Prairie Farmer*?"

"Well," with a sort of amused deliberateness, "I had thought a little of that, since they are inviting plain farmer people to air their wisdom. Do you think you could copy it, not in a scratchy girl's hand, but one easy to read? Sit here and try. I'm tired and feel like a clock with its machinery running down. By the great boot! I wonder if I am only to be half a man the rest of my life!" and he gave a groan.

"But the better half is in good order, your head and your hands, and Dr. Carpenter is sure you will improve as soon as the weather is pleasant enough to get out."

I arranged the little table just beside him. I was happy to see him so interested. Then I began on odd

slips of paper to see what I could do writing large. Father looked them over. I suppose it would have made a modern girl nervous, but we knew nothing about nerves in those days, and then I was so intent upon pleasing him. My whole heart had been full of sympathy all winter. I had never seen any one helpless before but a baby.

"This I think will do. And you write only on one side of the paper."

"Oh, dear," I cried, aghast, "think of all the paper it will take!"

He made a funny little *moue*, as the French call it. Paper was dear and poor. Foolscap was in general use.

I did not get along very fast, and presently the dark overtook me. So I put it away for the next day, but I was all impatience.

"Call Jolette to let me down a little. And then stir the fire."

Both were attended to. Then Ben ran in. He was going home to supper, and this was German evening. But he had two or three bits of brightness that amused father.

I finished the paper the next morning, and we folded it up and tied it with a cord, writing on the outside, "To the Editor of the *Prairie Farmer*."

"Now, Ruth," he said, "I wish you would take it down to the office. I doubt if any one is in just at this time, and so much the better. Lay it on the desk in plain sight. And I dare say it will go into the waste basket. But I believe that has been the result of some

first efforts of people who came up to fame afterwards. Don't stop to talk or explain, and I hope no one will see you. Then we won't get laughed at."

"If anybody laughs at that"—my face was scarlet and my eyes flashed—I could think of nothing bad enough for punishment.

"There, there, run along."

Men were going to and fro to dinner. I threaded my way hurriedly, and had a green veil tied over my face. Through Randolph Street, here it was on the corner of an alley way, "Paririe Farmer" over the unpretentious door way. I peered in timidly. There was a clumsy-looking boy with very red cheeks sitting on a box and kicking his heels against it. There was also a high square desk with four slim legs. I crossed over to this and laid down the precious package.

"What cher want?" exclaimed the boy gruffly.  
"Folks gone ter dinner."

"Nothing," I replied. But before I had shut the door curiosity jumped down with a thump and no doubt satisfied himself.

Father was very well pleased with the adventure.

"Now, Little Girl," he said, giving my hand a squeeze, as if it was the sign of a conspiracy, "don't say a word or give a hint to a living soul, not Ben or Sophie. We'll see what comes next week."

I laughed and nodded, and we crooked little fingers, and said, "Honor bright."

But oh, what a long week it was. I think if later on I had written a book and offered it to a publisher I couldn't have been more anxious. I looked over the

back numbers, and it didn't seem as if the articles were truly any better, though some took up a wider range.

Those old papers were narrow and local. Boston, mayhap, might have begun intellectual, but there was too much work in Chicago in those early years to indulge in flights of poesy or literary evolution. But they were strong and earnest, full of boundless enterprise and ambition, and the romance was to come later. Indeed, the romance then outside of the real business was marrying, having a home, and counting on what the children would do in the next generation. They did not think to build their Rome in a day, but they could lay foundations, stretch out arms that would bring the great world in its grasp.

I counted the days. Father said not a word about it. And I could hardly wait until afternoon. Cold as it was, I hung about the door-step and then ran down to the sidewalk to meet the boy, who stared at me as if I was demented. I glanced down the outside—oh, there it was. There was a throb of joy in my heart and a rush of tears to my eyes. I hurried in and laid the paper on father's lap.

"Hello!" he ejaculated.

I went and mended the fire and stood there many minutes, it seemed to me.

"Well, they didn't take us to kindle the fire with, did they!" His tone was so light-hearted it was like the ringing of a joy bell, and it gave me a thrill.

"I'm a foolish old fellow and you're a foolish young thing, but I guess we enjoy this bit of print, and there's no one to say we shan't. But there's been lots of books

and papers printed before we were thought of, and there will be after we are gone, and I s'pose each fellow will have a moment of pleasure, so why shouldn't we enjoy ours?"

We did enjoy it to the full. It was so sensible, so strong and practical, and full of a certain hope, assurance. And what gave us a greater delight was these few words on the inside, in the column of queries and items.

"Will John Farmer please send his address to this office? We commend his article heartily to our readers."

"We won't shout it out on the housetops yet. Roofs are too slippery to climb," and father laughed.

It was the best medicine he had for weeks. The sudden interest in a new channel, taking him out of his dreary waiting, strengthened heart and brain, if not body. It was a new resource.

The inquiry was answered, and to our surprise brought Mr. Wright himself. He spent a whole morning with father, and had really known considerable about father's work and success. He was a most delightful man, and years afterward I appreciated him and his work more truly than any unformed girl could have done.

He asked father then to go on writing, to give his experiences and advice. He, too, had boundless ambitions for Chicago, and his was the larger insight for education and broader movements.

His sympathy was very cheering as well. He put new heart into father. And though less than a year

afterward he was compelled by the stress of other matters, fully as important, to transfer the editorial helm to the Reverend Ambrose Wight, one letter in the name was not to make much difference. It was conducted with the same untiring zeal for local advancement, the same strong common sense and sterling integrity. Father had a warm friendship with him through a sorrowful time, and Ben Hayne found in him a splendid practical adviser.

And so spring opened. Father had some crutches and began to go out a little. But the streets were still in a dreadful condition, though now strenuous efforts were being made for some kind of pavements and sidewalks. As many people had raised their sidewalks two and three feet it was resolved to establish this grade. New houses were being built. Homer was rushed with business, and he wished Ben wasn't so booky. As a firm they could make no end of money just now. It was hard to find good workmen.

## CHAPTER XIV

### A TURN IN THE LANE

POOR father! My heart ached sorely for him. He suffered with his hip, and his leg was useless. He was still kept bandaged, and we hoped presently some improvement would happen to the joint. It was bitterly hard when he had been so active, so light of foot, so full of energy and hope. If it had not been for his writing now and then, I think he would have lost heart entirely.

But something had to be done. He considered several projects and discussed them with Dan, who seemed to know a little of everything. An overseer—but where could one find the right kind of man. Renting the place on shares he objected to strenuously.

"If you could get about the overseer might do," commented Dan. "But you want some one up on the good points of stock, of grain, of soil, of everything in fact, or else some one willing to study your methods, which have been a success. Well—I don't see how you stand it. I should make the whole atmosphere of

the town blue and sulphurous," laughing with hearty good nature, yet with evident energy.

"Can you make one stalk of corn bear five ears? If so swear," said father with a dubious half frown, half smile. "I have found that even a horse well brought up doesn't like to be sworn at. A mule may stand it. He can kick back."

"Do you swear at Chita?" I asked.

"Chita!" What a wealth of tenderness there was in the tone. "I'd about as quick strike her a blow, and I'd deserve to be horsewhipped if I did either."

Dan was a handsome, manly fellow. Even of all that came afterward I must admit it, though in this hardly more than girlhood I was not considering individual men. There were many in Chicago who were tall and strong and vigorous. Father was only medium size, and with no striking good looks, though he had a trusty, honest, shrewd and rather humorous face. But I loved him dearly. I could have gone to sleep in his arms as I had on that long journey from Massachusetts to Illinois, and now that he was unfortunate I knew I should never leave him.

Dan's figure while large was supple in its quick movements—lithe is the term, I suppose. He had the most fascinating air of laziness and ease. I have seen him throw himself on the grass with a grace that would have moved a sculptor to envy, and the manner in which he tossed his head back and laughed tempted me to save up the funny little household incidents and jests, and the quips I saw in the paper, just for the sake of the merry ring. There was the boyish sur-

render to fun, the delight in life that was really infectious. As a little girl I had felt afraid of him, there were moods now that made me tremble, there were glances of his eyes so deep, so eager that I felt a helpless captive with a wild, unavailing desire for flight. Then always recurred to me the night of the wild ride and how his arm had held me like a vice.

His hair was dark and fine and thick, with the ends curling a little. In the winter he wore a beard, in the summer shaved it off. He had a fine spirited nose, with flexible nostrils that made me think of Chita, and a beautiful upper lip, such as the old Latin poets gave to their women. When I came to read them Dan used to rise before me. He had a broad chin with a dimple in it, which he really hated. "It was good enough for a girl!" he would say disdainfully.

With all his kindness through the winter, I had come to be very grateful, and we were delightful friends, but on my part friends only. I could not imagine Sophie or Nanette with such a husband. I sometimes on Sunday interested myself curiously in thinking which of the grown-up young ladies he would marry. He called at the Doles quite often and took out Miss Alleta, who would have made a very striking Mrs. Dan Hayne. Then Martha Campbell was always extremely cordial to him and rumor said she would not be averse to more regular attentions. He was a prosperous young fellow, and though his trades were generally advantageous, no one ever accused him of unfair dealing. I do not believe he would have cheated any one out of a dollar, not from high principle.

but because he thought it mean, and meanness he abhorred.

Out of all the talk father and Dan came to a business arrangement. It was a great relief. Homer went over to Mrs. Morrison's, and after a good deal of haggling, bought the wheeling chair granny had used, so father could get about by himself, for his arms were strong, and there was an attachment at the side, lever-like, that could be propelled by the occupant.

Looking back at this summer it was a happy one. I was not much confined at home. Somehow I shifted the care of father on Dan. I spent a day now and then with Sophie, the baby was so utterly charming, beginning to say little words that we understood perfectly. Mother Hayne and Chris were also very pleasant. Chris had joined the church in the winter and his inmost desire was to be a clergyman. He had a really beautiful voice. On Sundays I used to stop—there were always some men in to see father—and sitting out on the old porch, much renovated and rose grown now, we used to sing the old Methodist hymns that I can never hear without the tears coming into my eyes.

“Oh, how happy are they  
Who their Saviour obey,  
And have laid up their treasure above,”

and

“Come thou fount of every blessing,  
Tune my heart to sing thy grace,  
Streams of mercy without ceasing,  
Call for songs of loudest praise,”

to the old tune of Greenville. There was still another:

“The Lord into His garden comes,  
The spices yield their sweet perfume,  
The lilies grow and thrive——”

Are there any new hymns now that bring heaven so near?

Mr. Hayne did not take cordially to the project. He could understand Ben's ambition, and looked to see him either a governor or a senator at middle life, but ministers were not likely to make fortunes. Chris told me his dreams, and not a few of them found lodgment in his mother's heart.

As for Norman, his lot in life seemed to be settled. Mr. Le Moyne was dependent upon him and loved him like a son. When Ben confessed his ambitions to his brother, Norman advised him to prepare for college and enter Harvard, as that had an excellent law school as well. He would send him two hundred dollars a year until he was through.

“Isn't that the loveliest and most generous thing in the world!” and the tears stood in Ben's eyes when he told me, beautiful brown eyes they were. “Norman's a solid brick. I think I can get through in five years, and this year to prepare. I should hate dreadfully to leave dear old Chicago and all of you. But I could come back in vacation if I thought it best.”

“It's just splendid. And then Boston is—is so different, and has so much in it”—and I paused, for my ideas of Boston were extremely vague.

“And she wasn't so wonderful when she was only

thirty years old. And now when you think of the canal that gives us the key to the Mississippi, the Sault Ste Marie planned, the railroads that in a dozen years more will be an accomplished fact—why, we shall be the centre of everything.”

We were enthusiastic, not mere braggarts. And the years showed the wildest dreams were possible, though so much of it had to be made by human hands.

“Six years. It is a long while to wait, isn’t it?” he continued musingly. “Then you will be——” studying me intently.

“I shall be twenty-one. Oh, Ben, please don’t think of that,” I entreated, for I could guess what was in his mind.

“It wouldn’t be fair unless you cared very much. Then, I think, it would be hard to have your lover so far away and miss all the sweetness of courtship. You see, I should be so engrossed I shouldn’t have time for society, and could not keep thinking of you. But I don’t believe you are really in love, Ruth. We are more like brother and sister.”

“That is it,” I cried. “And I do not think I shall marry at all, and that is why all you Hayne boys will be so dear to me. For now you see father will need me. I do not suppose he can ever be quite well again, and he has come to depend on me for so many things. And I shall try to be very happy.”

“You are a darling!” He caught my hand and kissed it. “And you see we can tell better then than now. I shall hope it will come about some way, for I sha’n’t never find any one I like as well as you.”

"Why, I shall be almost an old maid then," with an hysterical sort of laugh, yet a pang for lost youth. Girls in the new countries married young. "And I may be queer——"

"You will never be anything but sweet to me, a dear little girl, but it is best that you should be quite free. If it was ten years and I came back I know I should love you, for I should feel then that I had the supreme right, that there was no one to dispute me."

Dear, brave, loyal Ben. Never girl or woman had a truer friend.

It was by Mr. Wight's advice that Ben went to a preparatory school that autumn, since he had fully decided on his course, and we had no regular systematic training for college then.

Everything went on well, only father did not improve much. But his writing was a great delight to him, and papers at a distance spoke of John Farmer's trenchant articles, which pleased him immensely.

To be sure he and Dan did not always agree, but they gave and took, and so seemed to get along pretty well. I do not know what father would have done without him.

It would not be possible to be brought into such familiar contact with a man and not lapse into a certain intimacy, I suppose, especially as he had charming moods. He was so much older that I always thought of his marrying some one eighteen or twenty, and of the families of note. We sparred and jested, he praised my cooking at times, he thought I had such pretty, householdy ways, and that I loved father, which I did.

When I went to Sophie's or Mrs. Hayne's he came for me in the evening. And one picnic we had he took a team and a big wagon, and had no end of fun giving the girls, little and big, a drive. Miss Campbell was really devoted to him that day.

Somehow, I thought of Polly Morrison, though Miss Campbell did nothing pronounced, nor ordered Dan about as Polly used to do.

Mrs. Morrison had spent some months with her. Polly was like a queen. Mr. Maseurier had no end of slaves on his sugar plantation, and some were up to the great house. Both sons were married, one settled at New Orleans, the other in Vincennes. There seemed a great deal of gayety at that place, and Kaskaskia and Polly was in the midst of it.

Then there was a kind of all-day camp meeting in the woods, and Chris and I had a very happy time. Oh, the beautiful singing! I was almost impatient at the addresses and the praying.

I had, too, this summer a pretty flower garden of my own. Dan brought me some geraniums which I had never seen before. I did delight in it, and I used to keep the blossoms in the house. The first time I had a bowl full father said, "That's like old times. Your mother was so fond of flowers."

"Oh, do tell me about mother," I cried, hanging over the arm of his chair.

"There isn't much to tell, dear. We had three happy years. We were young and poor, and very hard worked. And one of the drawbacks to this prosperity is that she is not here to share it."

His voice fell to a tender solemnity, and I felt awed. I shuddered at the thought of death.

Then Dan began to take me out driving. He had another horse, but he seldom drove Chita except by herself in a kind of sulky. Sam was larger, and one of father's horses matched him. There was another odd thing, he did not treat me so like a child, though he was very sweet and less imperious. I liked him better, but there was a mysterious feeling that I could not explain. Still fifteen is generally not analytical, and in those days the frank, free life had not made us introspective.

The crops had been fairly good. Father I found had rather given up any hope of entire recovery, but he was not despondent. We had drawn so much nearer together, and I was taking such an interest in his articles. I was getting to be quite a theoretic farmer.

One autumn evening, it was raining very hard, a perfect deluge. No one came in. In fact, the east wind blew such a hurricane off the lake that a pedestrian could hardly keep on his feet. We had a splendid fire, and there was a box of geraniums in the window full of scarlet bloom.

"Come and sit here," said father, motioning to the arm of the chair.

It was broad, and he could use it for a writing desk. It was a favorite seat of mine. I put my arm around his neck and kissed him on the forehead.

"Little Girl," he began, "we love each other very much. We have no near of kin, it is just you and I."

"Yes," I made answer. "But there are all the Haynes, and Sophie, and several of the girls that I make believe are cousins."

He laughed. "And we must never separate, I think. I couldn't live without you."

"Oh, father, no! no!" I cried, with passionate emphasis.

"But suppose in a year or two some man wants to marry you, or rather that you fall in love. And—after all, love is the best thing in a woman's life. You see, the old people do not live forever."

"Oh, father, you must not, shall not die! If you did I should drown myself in the lake," and I put my wet cheek down to his.

"There, dear. I am not thinking of dying. Indeed this last month my hip has felt stronger, and I am quite myself. But I am a good many years older than you, and naturally would go first."

"Oh, do not let us think of it. I cannot bear it," I pleaded, with every pulse in a tumult.

"Under some circumstances I should like to see you married. You were not in love with Homer, and some one else was."

"And there has been Ben." Then I confessed that episode, which he had not even mistrusted.

"The third time is fatal, I believe." There was a half laughter in his eyes, yet a tender gravity as he looked earnestly at me, and my cheeks burned.

"Do you care for Ben? Do you want to be engaged?"

"Oh, no, no! I like Ben very much, but no, I do not

want to marry him—ever,” I said incoherently, but with decision.

“Listen, Little Girl. I cannot get along alone. If you were five years older and a strong, robust woman I might train you for an assistant. I have known women at home who cared for a farm and reared a family of children. But you are too young, and the conditions here are too wild, too unformed, too severe. They need a man’s strength and resolution to grapple with them. I have made a good start and am on the high road to success, only now I cannot follow it up. I see that, although I have fought against the conviction. Either I must give up and step out, or have some one to assist me who will take an interest, and whose interest will be the same as mine.”

“But will not Dan do it?” I inquired, innocently.  
“You and he get on pretty well.”

“He has proposed to on one condition. And that is  
—my little girl.”

His tone was low and he pressed me closer.

“Oh, you don’t mean—” I cried in a kind of terror.  
“You can’t mean—”

“He has asked me if I would object to his trying to win you. There need be no hurry. He is a smart, bright fellow with lots of energy and push, and it does seem as if everything he takes hold of succeeds. In this case we would go on together. Our interests would be identical. We should both love you. I shouldn’t feel afraid then that you would be left without a protector, if any untoward event happened to me. But I am not going to urge you. I think he must care

for you, since there are other girls with much richer fathers that I am sure would accept him for the asking. You may think about it."

"But I don't want to marry any one," I protested in great tumult of soul.

"You are so young. Yet it is rather queer you have not fancied any of these boys," and he gave a soft chuckle, as if it rather amused him. "Their mother cares so much for you, too. If I could be well again we would snap our fingers at them all. But farming needs the head to be able to get about here and there and keep matters up sharp. Well, well, I suppose we have to accept what comes," with a long sigh.

"It is very hard," I returned. "And yet you are so well otherwise, and not old."

"No; if I were ten years older I would resign myself to my fate without grumbling."

"But I do not want you any older."

"And you would be over twenty-five."

"A horrid old maid," I ejaculated. Single women were not held in high esteem in those days. There was a great need of wives, indeed many a first wife died of overwork or over ambition, and more men than women immigrated from the older States. Only the very undesirable were left behind. Of course I should be married sometime.

But it seemed strange to think of Dan Hayne as a husband. He was so much older. He rightly belonged to the girls of eighteen or twenty. But after I was in bed, and I could not sleep readily, I thought of the kind of son father needed. A man in store business

or a mechanic of any kind would be of little service to him. Dan was buying and selling property and stock, went round to the near-by settlements, was considered a good judge of many things, and had friends on every hand, though he was masterful and at times high tempered. He was a gay young "buck" as they termed it then, but marriage was supposed to settle a man.

The figure of Polly Morrison flashed up before me. Why, I could not tell, for I had not thought of her until she appeared like a strange, splendid vision. There was a mocking light in her glittering eyes. Why did she not forbid the bans? She only smiled in a sort of triumph.

The next morning Nanette came for me to go shopping with her, and though we had not a very extensive array of stores, still we had a nice variety of goods. Some of the older people thought there was too much catering to the pride of life. We made one or two calls, we chatted with the clerks we knew, and when I reached home Dan was just going away. He and father had been examining some business papers. We merely spoke. I ran in the kitchen to hurry Jolette about the dinner.

Chris came in the next morning. There was a wonderful preacher from England who could give our town but this one evening. Mrs. Hayne wanted me to come over to supper and we would both go. "And I'll see you home," said Chris, "if you can't stay all night."

I kissed father and went away. We had grown so much more caressing since his hurt. There was another neighbor in to tea. We started early and it

was well we did, for before service time the church was packed.

As I said, I liked the full, hearty singing. The strange clergyman had a rather imposing presence. I may as well confess that I was not particularly fond of sermons, but after a little I became strangely interested in this. There was the heroic self-sacrifice in it that appeals strongly to youth, taking up the duty set plainly before one and not making mean and shifty evasions. But unless the sacrifice or the work had some high purpose in view for God or the neighbor, it was in vain and useless. We were to help in the daily life that God gave us, to live out at our very best and truest. Simply praying for our neighbor was not all, when there was something to do.

I think I lost sight of the spiritual application. I kept looking at a thing that seemed set before me to do, and it grew clearer and clearer even if I did shrink from it. I was to trust to the promise—"My grace shall be sufficient." I was moved, exalted. I can do the sermon no sort of justice, but every one for weeks afterward talked of it, and Chris was most enthusiastic.

When we came home father and Dan were playing checkers, and they were both excellent players. Father held up his finger and merely nodded to Chris, who said good-night, for he knew how Dan hated to be interrupted in a game. I came and stood by them. This was the rubber, each had won one game. They were almost at the last and so evenly balanced that it seemed to me there was something more at stake

than a mere king row. A human soul was to be crowned or— Is there such a determining power as fate? If father won I should be free, if Dan, I should, I must be his wife. I watched with strained eyes. Fingers were hardly touched, then lifted. Father's forehead seemed gathered in a knot, Dan's face was smiling with that wonderful ease he had, the French call it insouciance. Father moved—Dan's last man went into the king row, and Dan smiled over at me.

## CHAPTER XV

### HOW MUCH WAS LOVE?

WE went on just the same for a week or two, friendly, pleasant, but some influence I could not shake off drew me nearer. Even now I suppose Dan was a fascinating man, since girls yielded so readily to his sway and older women made friends with him.

It was the full of the harvest moon, a magnificent, glowing night. There were some corn-husking bees to wind up with a dance in a new barn. There were boats going out rowing, for the lake was like a sea of glass. Dan really hated the water—I loved it dearly, but the great lake was occasionally deceitful at its blandest, and often a monster in its power to small craft. The larger vessels were safe enough. Father and I took a sail now and then, but Dan never went for pleasure.

“Ruth,” he said this evening, “do you remember the ride you once had on Chita? Come out and take another. There may not be a night like this in a year again.”

“Oh, I was such a little girl then. And we cannot both ride her now,” I protested.

"Why not?" In the moon floods of light his eyes transfixed me.

"Because I am so much larger. And you have grown stouter."

He laughed. "See here," and catching me with one hand he whirled me off the steps and clear around.

"You weigh about seventy-five pounds," gravely. "If I asked Chita to carry seventy-five pounds of grain and my stoutness she would go off like a bird."

"I weigh ninety-two," I returned with dignity.

"If it was ninety-four you would have to ride all the same," in a determined tone. "Do you want anything about you? But it is like a summer night. Come, I told your father I was going to take you. Or would you rather go to the dance?"

"Suppose I would?" I said saucily.

"We could go to the dance afterward."

For a week we had gone on as if nothing had happened. But every day the duty had grown clearer to me. Here was the son father needed. I could make all of his life easier. He was the dearest person in the world to me, and why should I not think of him first? There seemed two sides to me, which there would not have been if I had loved and understood truly what marriage meant, that it was not all father's comfort and interest.

"Come." He sprang on Chita. Then he made a sudden decisive motion with his arm, and gathered me up in front of him.

"I should have a pillion," I began complainingly.

"I want you here, just here, where I can see you and

cannot lose you. If I did, your father would beat out my brains with his crutch, and I would deserve it. There, are you comfortable?"

He settled me and placed his arm tightly about me, turning Chita with his right hand.

"I am very uncomfortable," I retorted petulantly.

"You won't mind it in a moment when we get out of this beastly street."

"Oh, don't!" I tried to loosen his arm. "I can't get my breath. I don't want to go."

"Will that do? I want you to be comfortable and happy. Five different girls have asked me to the dance to-night. Four of them would have been miserable if I had confined my attentions to one, and the whole five would have been indignant if I had distributed them impartially. And you are ungrateful."

Something in his tone touched me. After a pause he said, "And you have them all. Ruth, I want you to love me with your whole soul and body. I want you to marry me."

"There is Miss Campbell and Miss Conover. Think how much finer looking they are. Oh, I can't think why you should want to marry me."

"Well, queer as it may seem, and indifferent as you are now, there are some other points. I want you. I've resolved to win you, and shall do my best. And your father needs my assistance, may for some time to come. Can't we three pull together? You are not old enough to have loved any one else, you don't know anything about love, you little white blossom, so I shall teach you. Your father has consented."

I felt as if a net was drawn around me. Did I want to escape and leave father to suffer all sorts of anxieties? Here was some one strong enough, willing enough to shoulder them.

"Oh, I don't know—I don't know!"

"You don't love Ben," he declared fiercely. "It would be folly to wait all those years."

"Oh, no, no," I cried.

"And mother had a half hope Homer would wait for you. You see I know the family plans. Chris is too young even for *you* to wait."

There *was* another. But it might be years before we should see him. And he would have changed in all that grand life. He was learning so much that we common people would seem beneath him.

"Chita!" How tender the tone was!

At the word she was off, for we had left the crooked, uneven streets behind us. What a night it was! You could see the mountains of the moon traced out in vague darkness, and the rest in glorious effulgence. Some planets were visible, but she seemed to outshine the starry crowd, and veil the blue of the sky in a silver haze. Great far reaches of prairie like a sea, the stubble holding a gem on every little twig. From somewhere came a waft of wild grape, but it was so dry there was very little dew. The crunch of Chita's hoofs made a regular beat of music, but around all was a hush of emptiness, a kind of mystery that allured yet filled one with terror at its very solemnity, an atmosphere of strange enchantment, as if one could ride on to another world. Was I going on to a strange new world?"

"Isn't it splendid! I sometimes come out here alone, in fact, though I've ridden children on Chita, I've never taken one of the older girls out in this boundless solitude. Chita and I keep our secrets together. What do you suppose is beyond? Oh, must every one die in the end and go to that strange country? Wouldn't you hate to die, Little Girl? I want a long life of pleasure and love, and business activities and money making, and I wish I could never grow old. Why can't one slough off the old body when it gets feeble, and have a new vigorous one right here, with this glorious life. What do we know about any other world?"

I was transfixed by some subtle power. Indeed, I hardly knew what he said half the time, I was so penetrated by some strange influence. I thought I would like to be in that other country and have no more perplexities.

We turned at length, and for the first part went like the wind. Was Chita a creature of steel nerves and sinews? I caught Dan's arm.

"Are you afraid? Ruth, I wouldn't have any harm come to you for my own life. And what is there about you, slim little thing, only half awake to the real meanings of life! But you will know them all some day, and I shall be your teacher."

How exultant his tone was!

When we reached home father was in bed, tired and lonely was all he would admit. Dan was very eager to know if he could do anything, but father said no, he had some bad twinges in his hip and back, and Jolette

had heated some flannels in whiskey and laid them on. He would soon fall asleep and forget it.

"He was around a little too much to-day," said Dan.

I went to the door with him and he almost crushed me in his arms and kissed away my breath. I felt helpless in this vehemence, yet I had to admit now that he was my lover, would one day be my husband. Could I be as glad and happy as most of the girls were?

I went back to father's bedside. Oh, what should I ever do without him. Yes, it was my duty to do what I could for his comfort. That thought inspired me. To prolong his life!

I was not altogether a meek sweetheart. There were times when I feared and resented Dan's assumed authority. Once I said, in some rather heated argument:

"Oh, I am not compelled to marry you. I might say no, even when the minister asked me."

"You will love me so much by that time you will not want to," and his laugh was tantalizing.

He took it for granted that I should love him even as he desired. I would not have any one told, even his mother, and I declared I was not engaged until I had promised to marry him. I think now he liked the secrecy. It did not make any outward change in my life. I had a number of my young friends in on my birthday. I was sixteen and we had a merry time. Father brought out some of his best quips and told some funny Yankee stories.

"You'll have a better time without me," Dan said, and I think *I* did. There was no need of self-consciousness or embarrassment.

Father had a new plan that interested him strongly. This was building a house for me, for us all, but it was to be mine, farther away from the river, nearer the lake and on higher ground. It was afterward to be Washington Square. He had taken quite a plot of ground there a year or so before he was hurt, in the way of trade. We had a good deal of amusement planning it. It was to be of brick, full two stories, but with a peaked roof. He would have two rooms on the lower floor, a sort of office and a sleeping-room. We would have a real parlor, a dining-room—living-room we called it then—and a commodious kitchen. There was room for a vegetable garden, a henry, and some flowers. Pigs were at last debarred from the streets. Father raised so many now that he had a separate enclosure. Some people were trying to raise sheep and making quite a success, only there were at times forays of wolves, when every one turned out for a wolf hunt.

The old house was to be built on and turned into stores. Business was increasing on every side. The terms of peace with Mexico was arranged early in the new year. For the territory ceded we were to pay fifteen millions. There were bitter arguments pro and con. One party was resolutely against our having any more land, we were large enough now, we had not settled half the country we did own. The other side pointed out the advantage the Louisiana purchase had

been. Of course we needed the Mississippi River, but this wild land, overrun with Mexicans and Indians, would be more plague than profit.

Father was in favor of having all we could get.

The spring came early that year. We had discovered in our county a fine bed of clay and were making brick. All our lumber had to be brought from a distance.

I liked the new situation very much, only it was so far from the dear old friends. But it would be more convenient for father, and he had faith that the city would push up this way. We could see the lake, there were so few houses between.

I said first I would not be married until I was in the new house, but there were reasons why it seemed best not to wait, and when people once began to suspect Dan admitted the truth. We told his mother first of all, and her joy really brought tears to my eyes.

"I have always coveted you," she confessed, "though I should have picked out any one of them sooner than Dan, but I think he has about sowed all his wild oats, and you and your father will be a sort of ballast. I used to think you and Norman would make a match, but he's so weaned away, and he never could content himself here, I know. I expect to hear in every letter that he has married a grand lady. I suppose you could have waited for Ben, but that would have taken years. Dan does love you."

I had never thought of marrying Norman, for when I was old enough to speculate on such matters, I felt he had gone to the higher round above me in educa-

tion, accomplishments, and I was afraid he would despise the crude, unhandsome town after the splendid cities of the Old World. That was something out of my reach, so I could love the old life with him in it like a story where the incidents and characters were firmly enwrought in one's mind.

Our courtship had been rather curious. At times Dan's impetuosity swept me off my bearings and I could do nothing but yield. I had a vague feeling it was his overpowering domination, rather than anything I wanted to give. There were moments when it seemed as if I did not like love, and would fain run anywhere to escape it. Since father was very well content I would make myself so. And Mother Hayne said laughingly—"Men get over this tremendous love making after marriage and settle down into reasonable beings."

Father said we would get all the furnishing stuff when we were in the new house. We could tell better what we wanted.

I wished I had the courage to be married in church with the ceremony Sophie had. But I was not a Catholic, and I should have had to fight for such a thing. Dan wanted to be married quietly at home. But I coaxed Mother Hayne over to my views, and we settled upon the old Methodist Church.

"I shall be married there or not at all!" I said to Dan decidedly.

So we were married in the new Methodist Church on Washington Street, at noon, and I had three bridesmaids. My gown was white Suisse with plenty of

lace, and Dan gave a dinner at the hotel. It was very merry and pleasant. Healths were proffered, good wishes and kisses, for everybody kissed a bride then. I think Dan glowered a little over this. He had to take a good deal of chaffing and I was advised to "keep him with a pretty tight rein and make him toe the mark." There was the old joke of starting him out in the morning to kindle the fire, and having him split the kindlings and bring the water.

The infare was to be at our new house, and invitations were scattered freely.

I wondered if there were any heart burnings among the girls. I did not feel at all elated that I had captured him. Rather he had captured me. I could say honestly I had never made an effort.

Then we returned home to our little old house and had to take a horrible serenade. Dan went out and made a speech, gave the ringleader of the party some money and quiet was restored.

A fortnight after that we moved. Dan's mother gave him a feather bed and pillows, two heavy blankets and two light ones and six teaspoons that had been her mother's. She thought the oldest son ought to have them, and a tablecloth that had been in her wedding outfit.

The new house was very nice and comfortable, but a modern bride would have rather disdained it. The infare was a success. After that we were let to go our way, for there were several other brides, Miss Campbell being one, and she had married a promising young lawyer.

Father improved a good deal that summer. Jolette had gone with us and there was a half-grown boy who did chores, worked in the garden and went home nights.

Before father had finished his stores he was offered such an advantageous price for them that he sold and reinvested in land farther out. Dan hardly considered that wise.

"Everybody thought I was bit with the old Towner place," and father laughed. "The city is going to stretch out, and the lake shore is going to be valuable."

"Was I happy and in love?" Truly I could not tell. I counted on the time when Dan's vehemence should be toned down. He bought a pretty new horse, broken for a lady's riding, and we used to have splendid gallops.

Norman Hayne was travelling in Prussia and Russia. Ben entered Harvard. I think he did not altogether approve my marriage, but I gave him good reasons for it. Homer had a little son. Everybody seemed prosperous, though there were troubloous times about money.

The world was set ablaze then about the wonderful discovery of gold in California, the dream of the old Spanish explorers. Men rushed to the gold fields in perfect armies. And now we felt as a nation there was a great deal of grandeur in owning from ocean to ocean. Marvels were told of the western coast.

I settled down into a housewifely body. Father said now and then, "Oh, that is so like your mother."

He could not discard his crutches. He still kept up his interest in the *Prairie Farmer*, and had begun to

write other articles. The water works were occupying a good deal of attention. The lead mines were inexhaustible. Yet it took almost a week to get to New York. The Illinois and Michigan canal was opened. There were some brick buildings, and two aristocratic blue limestone ones that were pointed out as curiosities, having been built of stone that had been brought in ballast from the lower lakes. Michigan Avenue that was.

The Chicago River was being widened. Sidewalks were laid as the streets were filled up. Old Chicago was passing away, just as the Little Girl had vanished, though father often used the name. Dan had given me all sorts of pet names at first, then he settled down to Ruth.

And so a year passed, two years. Dan was much interested in city affairs, father was making money in the old ways. We had settled down, and I supposed I had all the happiness that comes to married life. No, not all. There was no child to gladden our hearts and draw us together. Homer had another little boy.

In the third year of our married life an incident happened that, perhaps, was an entering wedge in the dissatisfaction that came afterwards. One day father received a letter from a cousin who had married another cousin by the name of Gaynor. She had been left a widow some years before. The homestead had been willed to the eldest son, subject to her life-right in four rooms one side of the hall, and her living from the farm. The three daughters between had married, there was one son, now sixteen, who did not get on at all well

with his elder brother. He was a smart, bright boy, with a fair education. Now, he was wild to go to California, but she could not bear to think of the rough life and the temptations, so she was emboldened to write to her cousin, who she heard had done well in Chicago. "Could he put John in the way of anything?"

There was an appeal to old memories that touched me. Father so seldom mentioned his people.

"That's queer, isn't it?" he said, looking up with a dry sort of smile. "John Gaynor! Why, I had forgotten that I had a namesake."

"You might send for him," I suggested. "Sixteen. And if he is a nice boy—why do you give that absent sort of smile?"

"I was thinking. When I was a young fellow of nineteen or so I fell headlong in love with a second cousin, Sarah Parks. She was twenty-three. She reasoned me mostly out of it, and I found she had a fancy for an own cousin, Luther Gaynor. So she married him. Then I went to the western part of the State, and when I had managed to get a little together, married your mother. She sent me a paper with a notice of her husband's death, seven or eight years ago, and I wrote her a letter. It is odd how the old things come back to you. I recovered from my penchant for Sarah when she settled into a regular common farmer's wife."

"Then first love isn't always the best or truest," I said thoughtfully.

"That wasn't love, but a boyish fancy. I'm glad to hear, though. I wonder what this young John Gaynor is like?"

"Suppose you do send for him. If we shouldn't like him—but you may find something for him to do. And if he isn't worth anything you can pack him off home again."

"You can plan clear to the end, Ruth," and he laughed. "Well, we'll see."

Dan had gone to Galena, as he had some lead interests. Mr. Bayne, from the *Farmer*, dropped in that evening. After some newspaper talk he said:

"I don't suppose you know any nice, likely boy, Gaynor, that we could get in the office to learn the trade. Ours is as slow as molasses in January, and never can learn to set type. That Chris Hayne would be fine, but he has his heart set upon being a parson."

"Well, that's queer!" Father looked at me and made a funny face. "I have a namesake in Massachusetts who wants to come West."

"Yankee boys are generally bright and good spellers. You want one in a newspaper office. If he's worth his salt we'll take him, and let him earn bread and butter besides."

"John Gaynor. That's a good solid name," and father's eyes twinkled mirthfully.

"If he takes after you he's just the fellow to come to Chicago," was the reply.

Father nodded. "I guess I'll send."

"Do, do," was the eager response.

The very next day father Hayne was taken violently ill. I went down there and found Sophie trying to comfort mother. What should we do—send for Dan?

"Wait until to-morrow and see what the doctor says," returned the anxious wife.

Two of the neighbors were in, and I felt I must go home for the night, as I could be of no real assistance. But I was deeply troubled.

The next day we sent a messenger for Dan.

It did not seem that a strong, hearty man could fail so rapidly. But the disease was stronger, and in ten days Homer Hayne took the last journey, and lay in the best room, dead. Dan had come home in time, but his father was delirious until he went into a stupor, not knowing any one the last few days.

It was a dreadful shock to us all. Poor mother was beside herself with grief. There was a very sympathetic obituary notice in the papers. He had been a good, upright citizen, if he had not filled a very high place. And he had given the country five fine sons.

"That of itself is a great thing," declared father.

Sophie took the poor widow home for a few days. She was the tenderest of daughters. I would have been glad to do it, but grandmother was so fond of the children, we thought they would cheer her.

We wondered what she would like to do.

"Oh, I must keep my own home," she said. "I have Chris left."

"Yes," determined Dan. "That is best for the present. Father did not make a will, but not one of us would be mean enough to want to rob her of her home. She worked for it as well as father."

I was glad to hear him say that.

Mrs. Gaynor had not answered the letter. There had been such a sort of upheaval it had gone out of my mind. So I was mightily surprised when I came home one morning from some trading to see a young fellow sitting on the porch with father, and hear him say:

"Ruth, this is John Gaynor."

A nice, wholesome youth, between boy and man, with a fair, clean skin, rather light blue eyes, but with quite deep eyelashes and brows, and light brown hair, not with a decided golden tint, but giving the effect of having gold dust sprinkled over it. Not especially handsome, yet not plain, bright and intelligent.

He rose and shook hands with me. I liked him on the spot.

"I see I have taken you by surprise. Cousin Gaynor's letter was so cordial that mother thought I had better start at once. I should get here about as soon as an answer, as I have been explaining. I owe you a thousand thanks for your welcome."

"The thanks are mostly due to father," I returned. "I am very glad you have come. It is a pleasure to feel that there is some one in the world really related to us. Did you get here without any difficulty?"

"I did not have much, and I met with some entertaining fellow travellers. Mother said I had a tongue in my head and that I ought to have enough wit in my brain to ask needful questions. What a wonderful country it is! I am full of astonishment."

I smiled, the tone was so frank, one of those full round tones that inspire confidence. But I had to excuse myself and interview Jolette about the dinner.

When I returned he and father were in full tide about relatives who had died, and who had married, who had gone away, and about his own sisters, married to farmers and interested in their own lives. It seemed delightful, as if one was reading an entertaining book.

Dan did not come home to dinner, he often took it at the nearest hotel when he was busy. After father's rest we had the carriage ordered up and took a drive first along the shore of the magnificent lake, then over in the prairies. There were acres and acres of corn standing in ranks, their feathery golden helmets blowing about, their uniform of richest green dazzling in the sunlight. They looked so strong, so masterful, almost as if they might start, and march you down with human power. The boy was wild with enthusiasm. It had an odd effect upon father. His eyes brightened, the set lines in his face seemed to fill out, he looked glad and happy, and it thrilled me in every nerve. I did love him so in his misfortune.

It was quite late in the afternoon when Dan came home. I had been arranging the supper table between whiles looking after some choice cookery I did not want to trust altogether to Jolette. He walked straight in.

"Who's that on the stoop hobnobbing with your father?" he asked in surprise.

"Oh, Dan, it's a new John Gaynor from father's old State, and it's so queer how it all came about," glancing up eagerly.

I began at the very beginning, the letter from Mrs. Gaynor.

"Well, I think I might have been informed of the matter instead of having it kept a secret from me," he exclaimed resentfully.

"But, Dan, you see you were at Galena, and then your father was so ill and all that. It really went out of my mind. Father supposed Mrs. Gaynor would write again."

"Did your father send for that fellow?" His tone was stern and there was an angry flash in his eye. It roused resentment within me.

"He did," I answered bravely, but with some trepidation of heart. Then I explained Mr. Bayne's call that evening and the proffer of the situation.

"Well, I like that! To have some other people's relations dumped upon you in this secret, underhand fashion."

I stood up very straight and glanced in Dan's eyes. "I suppose father has a right to ask a relative to his own house," I said with dignity.

Dan flushed and his brow was one sharp frown.

"I thought the house was to be yours," he made answer in a biting tone. "And I did suppose your husband had some rights in it!"

"Oh, Dan, don't let us quarrel about the house or this young cousin or anything. Nothing must come between our love for each other," I implored, throwing my arms about his neck and kissing him. Then I knew he had been drinking.

Perhaps he felt ashamed. "I'm not quarrelling," he

**242 A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD CHICAGO**

said gruffly. "But a man does hate to find that his wife has kept secrets from him for weeks and weeks."

I had explained the whole matter and it was useless to reiterate it. But I did say—"Young John Gaynor needn't live here, you know."

He made no answer but went to his room to fix up for supper.

I could feel that father was hurt and amazed by his indifference at the table, which went almost to the verge of rudeness. Afterward he took his hat and marched out. I tried to make amends. I felt he would not have acted so if he had been perfectly sober.

## CHAPTER XVI

### HER RIVALS

OF course we kept our guest all night. It was midnight when Dan came home, and I pretended to be asleep. But he was quite cheerful the next morning. Chicago people were generally hospitable. There were new families coming in almost penniless, one may say, and they were helped upon their feet in the friendliest manner. It had seemed to me that Dan had a large and generous soul, but he did not show it now. I felt heartbroken.

We were to go down to the newspaper office. John thought he should like that above all things.

"I've never had half a chance at books," John said laughingly. "I had about made up my mind to study and get a district school. In a certain way I like farming, but it's not so easy in our old State. Here it must be splendid, inspiring! But a newspaper! That looks like fairyland to me. Cousin Ruth, I'm like a girl about fairy stories and King Arthur and Odin and all those old heroes."

That sounded like Norman, and warmed my inmost heart.

Fortunately we found Mr. Bayne and Mr. Wight both in. I think they were quite taken with young John. I wondered at his sort of aplomb for a country lad. He was no braggart, but he did seem to have a clear estimate of himself, and to most questions he said so cheerfully—"I'd like to learn."

The upshot of it was that he was to come for a week and try. Then Mr. Wight talked about Chris. Being a clergyman himself, he was taking a fervent interest in the lad.

We let father go home, and we took a walk about old Fort Dearborn, and talked western history, which interested him very much, as he had only the vaguest idea about the West. In spite of last evening, I had a light-hearted feeling, as if I was the Little Girl of the past going about with Norman.

On our homeward way, just as I attempted to cross the street, a carriage halted. There were two women in it, and one leaned out calling to me laughingly—"Ruth Gaynor—Ruth Hayne!"

I drew a long breath of utter amazement, and simply stared. But for thin, pale Mrs. Morrison I certainly should not have recognized Polly. She was a handsome woman and dressed in the richest manner. She seemed all of a glitter from her shining, rippling hair, the bronze feathers blowing about her hat, the cloud of lace around her neck with gold threads in it, and the glistening silk gown. On her one bare hand shone a circlet of diamonds, on her wrist a bracelet.

"Oh," I ejaculated, drawing in a long breath of surprise.

"If you had met me in a pudding pot you wouldn't have known me," and she laughed with an amused gayety. "You might get stirred up in the mush, but I wouldn't, I'm too large."

"Polly Morrison," was all I could say.

"I came yesterday afternoon. This is my first visit home, though I've trotted up and down the Mississippi until I know every turn and every town. I have a husband who hardly lets me out of his sight and he has never found it convenient to come to Chicago. Perhaps he is afraid he might see some other woman he would like for a wife, he had such astonishing luck before. And how Chicago has changed! All the old houses have been built on to, and the stores and warehouses! It can't hold a candle to New Orleans, and Kaskaskia is a gay old town, but you're coming on. Is this Chris?"

"No," and I explained.

"We're just out for a flyer. I took mother along so that people would be the more likely to recognize me. This afternoon we must go calling. I suppose I ought to stay at home and let the neighbors call on me, but I want to see them so. And poor Mrs. Hayne is a widow. Ben gone off to college, is it? Homer getting rich and peopling the town, but the other one is abroad—married to some French marquise, I suppose, and Chris going to be a minister. Lots of other changes. There! You may look to see me some day."

Her talk had been a swift dazzle, and made you feel as if some one had whirled you around.

"What a talker," said John. "And what a handsome woman. She looks fit to be a queen!"

We hurried home. I was anxious to have the dinner all right, and I didn't exactly want Dan to see me coming home with young John Gaynor. Why, I could not explain altogether to myself.

Jolette was just dishing up when Dan entered. He should not accuse me of secrecy this time.

"Oh, Dan," I cried, "did you see the new arrival, not exactly in a coach and four, but in Harman's barouche? Madame Maseurier and her mother viewing the town."

"Polly Morrison!" he ejaculated. "How does she look?" He was all interest.

"John thinks like a queen. She is wonderfully handsome, or else it is the fine clothes."

"Come to show them off, I suppose. The old Frenchman with her?"

"No. But she said her husband hardly let her out of his sight."

"I'd trust Polly for squeezing out some dark night if she wanted to." Then he gave his old, merry laugh, and a good-humored nod.

The dinner passed pleasantly. John had a good deal to say about the town.

Dan's strictures rankled in my mind. I really wanted young John to live with us. I liked him so much already, as one might regard a young brother, indeed as I did Chris, only John belonged to me, to father. But I did not want any trouble or jealousy.

The lad went down to the office the next morning, taking some lunch. Dan did not ask about him. He came home very enthusiastic. He had struck just the right thing, he was confident. And, grasping father's hands, he said in his young, earnest voice, he could never be thankful enough for that cordial letter of his.

It was the third day later when father was resting after having spent the morning in the fields, that I took my sewing and sat beside him. Presently I said tentatively :

"I am glad John has taken such a liking to the printing office. What a cheerful, ambitious fellow he is."

"A real Yankee!" Father laughed. "I like him very much. It seems a whiff of my native air—of my boyhood's air. Only I hadn't the ambition. The world was not so ambitious. People had an idea in those days that God had put you just where He wanted you to be, and that it was a sin to try to get elsewhere. They didn't read the Bible right in the very beginning, 'Dominion over everything' is his birthright."

After a pause I began in a kind of indifferent tone, "Do you not think it would be a good thing for him to board near the office, where he could run home to his dinner? He is a growing lad, and a cold lunch doesn't seem just the thing. Then in winter there will be storms and awful going."

"We're not in winter now. What is to hinder him from staying until then?"

He looked suddenly, sharply at me. I felt the hot blood rush to my face.

There was a silence. The fresh wind off the lake sang its murmuring song, and the birds gave the chorus, but I could feel the other hush.

"Yes, what's to hinder?" rather impatiently.

"I thought," then my voice faltered.

"Did Dan say anything? He doesn't like the boy's coming, I can see that."

"He felt hurt because he had not known about it. So many things happened just then——"

"Well, it was rather queer. He might have struck something at home, and not come at all. I should have felt like a fool making a great spread about it. I did suppose his mother would write again. But I don't care now. And the house isn't Dan Hayne's! There's our bargain in black and white. To be sure, I haven't deeded it to you. I started to once, when Hamilton made a suggestion——"

"We have been so happy and peaceable."

"Ruth," his voice was low, and with an inexpressible longing, "I wish you had a child or children."

"Oh, father, it has been the one desire of my heart, my trial, my constant prayer," and I leaned my face down on his arm and cried softly.

Sophie had twin boys besides her other son and daughter. Dan envied the twins with the longing of fatherhood. This matter had been a sorrowful disappointment to us both.

"There, dear," said father presently. "There may be some wise purpose in it that we can't see now. But

I don't say, like David, in his prosperity, "I shall never be removed. Thou, Lord, hast made my hill so strong." I think quite often of the time when I *shall* be removed. I'd like to know that some one of my blood would take a delight in these broad prairies and fertile fields. It seems queer when luck went against me in my early life that I should have so much of it now when I am an old lamentor. Of course, Dan is an excellent manager, it's born in him, but I keep things up sharp as well. This was what Hamilton said: 'If your daughter dies without children you know this goes to Mr. Hayne. Have you no relative that you would like to succeed her?' I stopped short then. You see Dan might marry again, and your property go to another woman's children."

"I wouldn't mind Dan, but another woman and her children—oh, I couldn't bear to think of their living in this house—the children I have been denied," and I could not stifle my sobs.

"Little Girl, you may outlive Dan. Think how his father went, who had never had a day's illness in his life before. But one needs to consider all the points. So I have been thinking this last year if there was any one I would like to have succeed us, or if I should leave it to found a hospital, which we shall need. I couldn't make up my mind. I thought we would talk it over some day. And now John has come in a sort of miraculous way. We do not know how he will turn out in the end—but I like the name—John Gaynor. Would you mind if he came after us?"

"Oh, I should like it. Already he seems like a brother."

"That is, if there should be no children. We needn't give up hope," and he smiled tenderly.

"Yes, I should like him to come after us," I said after some moments of thought.

"Meanwhile, if I want to help him out of my part of the profits, you will not feel sore?"

"Oh, no, no," I returned earnestly.

"Of course I want him to make his own way, it gives a young fellow more reliance on himself. But he might as well live here——"

I was cut to the heart with a curious presentiment. Dan would be jealous, I knew by what he said that first night. If it had been altogether the drink he would have met the boy cordially afterward. But he had not. I had never thought of Dan caring especially for father's property, yet I wondered now if he would have wanted to marry me if there had been only a trifle. As I grew older I could not understand why he had been so persistent, when I had not really "fallen in love with him," as the phrase goes. I might have been mortified if he had given me up at last, but I knew now I should not have been heartbroken. I had tried my utmost to yield him all wifely love. Sometimes he was fierce in his vehemence, and it turned me cold at heart. I liked the gentler moods best, but occasionally there was a hard indifference. If there had only been a child to give scope to the fatherly feeling! After that I think I would only have been the mother of his child.

There was nothing to do but to tell father the truth. He was quite angry at first, but he loved me too well to risk my happiness, so he consented reluctantly. But John should come as a visitor and be made welcome.

"And whatever you want to do for him you must do without thinking it will take aught away from me," I said firmly. "It is all yours, and I want you to be happy."

"I wish I had never persuaded you to marry Dan Hayne," he subjoined in a profoundly reflective manner. "But I was truly afraid then that I should die, and he did seem to love you."

"And he loves me now," I returned bravely, but with a curious sinking of heart.

It took more than one talk to get matters settled and father was loth to let John go. But I knew how necessary it was when Dan said with an acrid sound in his voice—"Is that fellow going to hang round here all the time?"

"No," I replied cheerfully. "He is to board with Mrs. Wilson down on Lake Street. It will be so much more convenient when he is once fairly at work. He has decided to learn the printing business."

I knew he looked sharply at me, and I hated to have anything to hide from him.

I went over to Mrs. Wilson's and selected his room, seeing that it was comfortably bedded and furnished. Then I paid her a month's board in advance, explaining the relationship to father and saying that he was warmly interested in his namesake's welfare. She

promised to see that he was well taken care of in every way.

He hated to go, declaring he did not mind the walk nor the early rising it entailed. But we set it out so very much to his advantage that he ceased to object.

"And we shall look for you on Sundays and whenever you like of an evening. We shall keep a sharp watch over you and see that you do not go astray."

"I should be a beast if I did after all your kindness," he returned with deep feeling.

I was rather glad that Polly Morrison, as people still called her, made a diversion through this time, when relations were strained. It was quite an event for the town. Madame Maseurier was somebody in her silks and furbelows. She was not "dined and wined," though no doubt the gentlemen would have done it if it had been admissible, but tea drinkings, the complimentary honor of that day, were proffered.

"Dan," I said, and I tried to keep in my usual mood, even if he was captious, "Dan, Mrs. Gurnee has asked us to supper to meet Madame Maseurier to-morrow evening."

"Well—" rather sharply.

"If you don't care to go I will send regrets."

"Who said I didn't care to go? Can't a man think a moment if he has anything to prevent?"

I made no comment,

"Do you want to go?" in a curious tone.

"It is always pleasant at Mrs. Gurnee's, and her tea is delicious. It must come straight from China."

"Oh, it is no doubt part in the brewing. Well," with a nod of the head, "we'll go and inspect the Madame in her fine array. I hope you have something decent to wear."

Fortunately I had a silk gown made in the latest style. The skirts were very full, and mine, because I was very slim, had to be laid in plaits underneath the gauging.

Certainly Polly was a fine-looking woman and distinguished in manner, in spite of her madcap youth. Several of her old admirers were present as husbands, and she distributed her smiles impartially. She seemed to have a very ready wit and much intelligence, and really was fit to grace a court.

The next night but one we met her again. She was very charming and brilliant.

"I hear you have a fine new house," she said to Dan. "Am I to have a chance to view it?"

"It's nothing to your fifty or hundred year old houses with all their treasures. Chicago, you will remember, is new, and the world has not yet poured its luxuries into our laps. I had an idea you had given it a long last farewell."

She laughed softly. "That is to say you decline—and an old friend! I did not think you so cruel."

He flushed. "No, I should feel quite honored," he subjoined quickly. "Ruth, is there an evening you and Madame Maseurier can agree for her to come to us?"

I really wanted father to see her, so I accepted the opportunity readily, for I had hardly dared propose it to Dan, and she agreed with charming suavity.

"You can hardly make Polly Morrison out of her," I remarked as we were walking home.

"She has been polished up by society, we must admit, and she is what I call a handsome woman. Those tall women always do have such a queenly look. It pays a man to get them fine clothes."

And I was barely medium.

I did my best to have a pretty tea table. Dan said not to ask any one else. We had made some vines grow over our porch, and I had a row of flowers on each side of the walk, like my mother's dooryard. Polly admired it cordially and told us of the southern flowers and vines that grew so riotously in their sweetness and bloom. She sat and talked to father until they were summoned to tea, and we had a rather merry meal. She thought our prospect so fine, the great sweep of prairie on one side, the lake on the other. They laughed about old Chicago, though Polly said it had not made rapid strides only in a business way.

Her eyes gave one the queerest feeling, as if they really absorbed you, drained you of some power, and yet you were lured to meet them again and again.

Dan proposed to take her home in the buggy.

"Oh, no, let us walk," she returned. "I am afraid of these uneven narrow lanes at night, when you can't see the pitfalls."

So they went off together, she with a lace scarf over her shining, rippling hair, southern fashion.

"What do you think of her, father?" I asked, as we settled ourselves on the porch.

"She is out of the ordinary, a woman to take a man straight to the devil if she so elected. I don't wonder her husband keeps a good watch over her, but she seems to accept it gayly. I do not believe she has any heart."

Dan did not return until midnight. At first when he was out late I used to keep awake until I found it annoyed him. Now I went to sleep if I could, or pretended.

Two or three days after that Polly returned home.

John trudged over when he had been at his boarding place three days. It was as nice as it could be, but wasn't like this, and the street was wretched down that end. Yes, the meals were very good, and the office work was easy enough. Mr. Bayne had asked him to come in some evening, he had quite a library. He had written everything to his mother, a long, long letter, and she would be so amazed, so delighted.

"I wish I might call you Uncle John," he said in his frank, free way. "It seems to bring you into the proper relation—there's so much difference between us in years. Oh, at the office they think you know such a lot!"

"I've had a chance to learn a good deal in the years I've lived. Any one can who keeps his eyes open and adds two and five together."

"But why two and five?"

"Because it takes you farther along than two and two. Sometimes when you go out of bounds you strike a new knowledge."

Sunday morning Dan went off with one of the packers to look at a drove of cattle, and we had a delightful time with John all day. He told us about his sisters and their families. One of the husbands taught school in the winter. His own brother seemed a rather close-fisted sort of person, and his mother now and then went out nursing. But there was no chance for a young fellow in the town unless he had a farm to start with.

Dan seemed to settle into a sort of tolerant mood toward young John, but though I tried my best I often found him sharp and captious. Then he would have a spell of being tigerishly fond of me. I cannot use any other adjective, and it filled me with terror, as it had times before, as if he sought to impress upon me that I was his alone.

Then we heard that Mr. Pierre Maseurier had been thrown from his horse and picked up with a broken neck.

Everybody wondered what Polly would do. Her mother went to her.

So the winter came on again. Half a century had passed. It was 1850. How queer it seemed, as if we had written 1840 all our lives. And I was twenty years old.

Ben was in Harvard. Mr. Wight planned for Chris to study Latin and Greek, and go to a preparatory school another year.

Mrs. Morrison and Polly came home. It seems that Mr. Maseurier had made no will, and the sons claimed everything. Wives were not well provided for at that

period. Still, the sons gave her a small portion of their wealth, and she returned to Chicago, her luxurious life at an end. I wondered if she was very sorry. She wore heavy widow's mourning, and did not look as attractive as in all her furbelows. Then widows were expected to live very quiet, retired lives for six months at least.

I was rather surprised when Dan inquired somewhat brusquely one day if father had given me the deed of the house.

"Is it worth while before I am twenty-one?" I asked.

"What a silly idea! It is worth while any time. Ask him to do it. He promised to."

I spoke to father.

He went over to Judge Manierre and had the deed made out. The house and the three acres of ground, barn, outbuildings, etc., were mine, and to go to the heirs of my own body, failing in that they were to revert to the original estate of John Gaynor. Then he made his will. Everything was left to me during my lifetime with the exception of a few gifts of land, a plot to Dan Hayne, another to the son of his cousin, John Gaynor. At my death without lawful heirs it was all to go to John Gaynor. There were several permissions given about selling under certain circumstances. And if John Gaynor died without heirs the estate was to go to the city of Chicago to found a hospital.

He brought a copy home to see if I was satisfied with it.

I said I was entirely. If I died, why should father's fortune go to enrich one who would soon forget me?

For now I had an awesome consciousness that my husband did not love me as Homer loved Sophie, as many wives were loved. I tried to be sweet and patient, to keep my house in pretty order, to have his clothes just as he wanted them, and everything to his hand, to be ready if he asked me to go out, which he did not often do nowadays. He was a good deal with the men. He had been training Chita's pretty colt for a splendid racer and was proud enough of him. Then he was off to Galena for a week at a time, or on some other business over night.

When he learned about the house he was very angry. I had never seen him in such a passion. It turned me sick and cold. He had never sworn at me before, and he said dreadful things about father.

"It is all father's," I replied. "He gives it to me during my lifetime if I outlive him, and while he lives no one can take it away from him."

"He promised you the house. It was an object for me to marry you."

"Then you did not love me?" I faced him with that.

"Well, in a way, yes. But you are poor, barren stock! And here comes this beggar's brat that no one ever heard of before—why, I thought you had no relations. And he is to take everything."

"I may live to be an old woman. And father may live years yet."

He had certainly seemed stronger the past year. He had attended to nearly all the planting in the spring,

Dan had been away so much. He got about very well with only one crutch.

Dan swore a horrible oath and turned on his heel. I was glad father was not in the house, but I was mortally afraid he would go after him. He was away then for two or three days and nights. There are some shocks that seem to change life for us, make a difference that one can never wholly surmount. I knew this had come to me.

Dan was not covetous. He made money easily, and spent it freely without any apparent regret. There were suppers with the men, and he was generous about helping his friends. So why should he have counted on father's money when he could be a rich man with a little carefulness?

But the awful knowledge that was more than suspicion rushed over me, leaving me cold and faint. Father *had* been poorly that winter. And I knew now if father's land should be turned into money, if the city should go on spreading out, I would be an heiress. Dan had as much faith in Chicago's future as father.

Had this anything to do with his fancy for me? I could not blind myself to the fact. Then I think I had piqued him by not being too easily won. It was not coquetry, but because I had never felt certain of myself.

I was so miserable I had to tell father.

"My poor Little Girl!" Then he roused to anger. "I can easily destroy the deed. The bargain was that I should deed the house to you, but that I should have

my home in it as long as I lived. I never promised to will all my property to you. For a certain amount of oversight he was to have a certain share of the profits. This last year he has not done his part at all. I could justly complain of him. I have hired some of his work done out of my part. He is with a gay set and he does drink. Oh, my Little Girl, you are between two fires."

He took me in his arms, and I cried on the dear fatherly breast.

It is curious how the expected fails to meet the mark. Father had resolved to brave it out, and I was shaking in every pulse. But Dan returned careless and pleasant, ate his supper with rather exuberant gossip, dressed himself, and went out with no sign of storm, and we would not throw the first dart.

"Ruth," Sophie began hesitatingly one morning when I had gone in to see the babies, which were my delight, "what calls Dan down to the Morrisons' so much? He is there every few nights. And he took Polly out driving after nine o'clock. Some one ought to put a stop to it. Polly is being very retired and discreet, and all that, but this is going on."

"How do you know?" I asked, cold as ice at heart.

"I can't tell you without a breach of confidence, that is, not the name. But it *is* true. Shall Homer take it up?"

"Oh, no, no," I cried. "Don't let him quarrel about me. I can't tell. Wait and let me think."

"It will be an open scandal by and by, though they carry it on in the dark. Somehow I always rather

distrusted Dan. Oh, you ought not have married him."

But it was all done. No one can take a step backward in his or her life. I remembered what father had said about Polly.

I rose weak and trembling. I said again I must think it over. She kissed me tenderly, but I was like one bereft of feeling.

## CHAPTER XVII

POLLY.

I THOUGHT when I was out in the street I would go and see Mother Hayne. I would like to know how this matter of the house seemed to a woman who had been a wife many years. Yet her husband had not taken pains to make any special provision for her. Why should a wife then provide for her husband? I felt ill and perplexed.

Her face was radiant. She clasped me in her arms and kissed me again and again.

"Do people ever go crazy with joy?" she cried, and there was the wonderful sound in her voice that comes from a full heart, satisfied to the utmost. "I've read this letter over and over again. Norman is coming home!"

Was he going to bring a wife? I wondered in a dull manner, but I uttered no word.

"You must read it. I can't begin to tell you. Norman has won his good fortune, for I know he has been the best of sons to that poor old man. And now he comes back to us. Read! read!"

She thrust the letter into my hand and sat down, wiping the tears from her face with her apron, smiling through them, her face fairly transfigured and looking almost like a girl. I stared at her, the transformation was so wonderful.

"Read! read!" she cried impatiently.

In the previous letter he had written to his mother he had spoken of a rather severe illness that had attacked Mr. Le Moyne. It had not made any special impression on me. But here in the very beginning—and they had gone to one of the pretty coast watering places where, though he was quite feeble, he seemed to recuperate. No one had felt especially alarmed when he had a slight recurrence, and for a few days he had seemed not to lose ground. Then there had occurred a sudden collapse of all the vital energies and in twenty-four hours he had passed away. But he had kept some sight to the last. It had been a horror to him lest he might have to be led about, and he had prayed to go before that time. And though Norman would miss one who had been the kindest of friends, indeed a father to him, he had lived out the allotted span, and had his wish granted.

Part of the letter had been written while they were making arrangements to go to Paris. His family slept in Père la Chaise, and he would be laid beside them. There was much in the tender regard and sorrow that brought tears to my own eyes.

Arrived at Paris he had found a great deal to do. Mr. Le Moyne's papers were in the safe of a notary. All the arrangements had been made to a letter. He

had left quite a large fortune. There were some distant relatives remembered, he had been generous to the oculist who had prolonged his failing sight, to his numerous friends, doubly generous to him, Norman, and the residue had gone to charity. As soon as he could get through with his part of the business he should fly home at once, though the probabilities were that he would have to go back again. But he was dying for a sight of the dear ones, especially his mother in her sorrow.

It was indeed a heart-appealing letter. We both cried over it, yet it gave us a great sense of joy. I forgot my own troubles entirely, and though she was fain to keep me I hurried off home. They were just sitting down to dinner.

"Oh, Dan," I cried, "your mother has heard such news. Mr. Le Moyne is dead and Norman is coming home. He has been left quite a fortune. She wants you to come down and read the letter."

"Hello! That *is* news. And a fortune! The Haynes are looking up. Well, I suppose Norman is so Frenchified and full of airs that he will give Chicago the go-by. No word of his marrying? Mother doesn't seem to accumulate daughters-in-law very fast."

Father was interested as well. When Dan rose to go he said pleasantly, with what sounded like desire in his voice—

"Ruth, don't you want to go out for a drive this afternoon? There's such a fine breeze and the sun isn't over hot."

Was there really a smile on his face? My heart leaped up in gladness and I answered joyfully.

Father and I talked quite a while afterward. He was glad to see Dan so cordial. I could not tell him what I had heard. And yet might it not have been mere gossip?

He had made several ill-natured flings about the house, but no real complaint again. I do not suppose he knew about the will. I was glad and thankful to have him pleasant, and to ask me to go out with him.

And yet as I sat there waiting, so as not to detain him, my heart went down again and I questioned his motive, feeling that it was terrible for a wife to do that. How had I lost faith? How had I come to have this mysterious outlook so dark and full of fear?

He was bright and smiling when he came. It was a perfect summer afternoon and the air was fragrant with the growing crops, beautiful and peaceful too. A golden light hovered over all, making subtle waves in the air, and then followed the rose-colored suggestion of coming sunset, as if to herald the brighter glow. Dan had been very pleasant, jolly, finding so many amusing incidents. To me there was a sort of sweetening of perceptions, a sense down deep in my consciousness that matters would go better. What if he had taken Polly out to ride one night, what if he had called there occasionally? I was his wife, and if he had been vexed about things he *must* love me, since we were to go on to our life's end. And no matter how hard it was, I *must* love him. It seemed as if I had never

known how high and solemn a thing love was until now.

When Dan lifted me out of the buggy he kissed me and said, "Have you had a nice time, Little Girl?"

"Oh, Dan!" I hugged his arm. There didn't seem any word in my vocabulary strong enough to express my satisfaction.

I remember he played checkers that night with father, losing the first game, winning the second, but father captured the rubber.

"I'm getting rusty," he laughed. "I must brush up. Now let us have a game of cards."

There were several new games. I took a hand with them. When Dan went out to see if Chita and Duke were all right, father said:

"Dan hasn't been drinking for several days. If he could realize how much more of a man he is when he lets whiskey pretty well alone, I think he'd drop it. It was quite like old times to-night, wasn't it, Little Girl?"

My heart was so full that I could only kiss father. Both of them had called me "Little Girl."

I was so comfortable that I dismissed all thoughts of Polly. Indeed, Norman's return was the great theme of conversation, and most people were speculating on how much of a fortune he would have. Mr. Harris had dropped into quite an old man and his hair was snowy white. He took great credit to himself for starting Norman on the road, as he phrased it, and talked over all the early times with father. Oh, how fascinating they were!

I had given up corresponding with Norman, given up my French also. I had written several times after my marriage, but I must confess Norman's letters had lost something of their charm. He used to say, "Do you remember this or that, the walk we took here, the talk about such a poem or such a legend?" He had left off all these references.

"Why do you have to write to Norman?" Dan said on one occasion. "Can't you hear all the news from mother? And I should think the letters must be mostly repetitions."

"Why, I don't *have* to," I said laughingly.

Then I began to send messages in his mother's letters. She used to write them in journal fashion, and it was quite a labor. Once she said, "I do grudge postage for such clumsy packets, or I should if Norman didn't send it every now and then, twice more than I can use." It was very sweet of him.

Every day I thought of his return. He was twenty-nine now. How would he look? not like Homer—I wanted him to have his own individuality.

We went on very comfortably. Dan looked after business better, though he made some trips away—two or three days at a time. I said to Sophie, "I think that about Polly was awful gossip. Dan does stay at home a good deal."

She shook her head dubiously. "It came very straight to me. But Polly has been away some latterly. I suppose we will presently see her blossoming out of widow's weeds, and she'll capture some one with money again. You mark my words."

There was one point Dan did not try to overcome. He did not, would not, like young John, who was doing well and a favorite with his employers. He remarked it.

"Cousin Ruth," he asked, one of the Sundays he was specially invited, which meant that Dan would not be at home, "why does Mr. Hayne dislike me so? I don't do anything to him. Is it because your father does a little in a money way for me? I mean to pay it all back as I get along. And the house is uncle's, I suppose? I'm not going to ask anything outright. You've both been so kind, and sometimes I feel as if I rather sneaked in, don't you know," and there was a perplexed light in his eyes.

"Nonsense!" I returned decidedly. "He used to be curt to his own brother Ben at times. Men who have to order others about and swear at cattle and all that get brusque ways."

"You see *my* brother didn't like to have me round, why I never could quite tell, unless he thought mother was taking a double share out of the farm, and I worked like a trooper out of school hours. I've seen just the same look in Mr. Hayne's eyes."

"You come for father's sake," I made answer.

Nevertheless, I had some misgivings. I seemed to be leading a double life. I was smoothing out the thorns and crookedness between father and Dan, I was having this pleasant young fellow on the sly. Sometimes I had a strong mind to ask father to change the deed of the house and let Dan have it when I died. But on the other hand, Dan was spending money freely

everywhere. He did bet on games and cards, and on the Indian races. He gave a supper to the men occasionally. Of course, he always won on Chita, perhaps on other risks. He was very free handed.

Father had so few wants, and no extravagances. Surely he had the right to spend a little on his own kin.

Oh, how I did want a friend in these days. I wished at times that I was a Catholic and could go to confession. Père Saint Pailais was so lovely, and his voice had that beguiling winsomeness that I longed to have it comfort me, set me straight. For I was beginning to feel there was a great hard wall between Dan and me. I tried my best to love him. Oh, what *was* love!

Yet, some of the wives I knew had fallen into a settled routine, I was going to say indifference. They kept their houses well, looked after their babies. Their husbands went out in the evenings to smoke or talk politics, trade, crops, and they ran into a neighbor's to gossip. Why could not these things satisfy me? There were sudden impulses that led me to kiss Dan, to almost beg that he would love me as he had in those first few years, when I did not really want it. Perhaps I had tired out his love. Mother was sure married people "settled."

I knew father was watching me very closely. I tried to hide my thoughts with a girlish gayety. It occurred to me more than once that I might have to choose between Dan and father, and in my secret heart I knew I should go with father.

Polly was beginning to crawl out of her seclusion a little. I met her one day at the bookstore where I was buying some articles for father. I could not understand why she should color up so. She really did look enchanting with the bit of lisso roll to her widow's cap inside the bonnet, often called Marie Stuart. She had a "book muslin" collar worked with black and little turn-over cuffs of the same material. Her white skin and her wavy hair, her full red lips with their tempting curves almost fascinated me. Did Dan ever kiss her? I wondered. Could she take a man "straight to the devil?" I shuddered.

"You don't look well," she began in her mellifluous tones. "You are thin and pale. Do you know I used to think you were quite a pretty little girl, but I suppose we all do go off some," laughing. "I tell mother I never want to be a horrid-looking old woman like granny. Wasn't she frightful? So I hope I'll die somewhere along midde life, when I can make a decent-looking corpse. And Norman's coming home! Don't you suppose if Norman had stayed here you would have married him instead of Dan?"

"I think Dan made me marry him," I gasped, as if the words were wrested from me.

"He's awfully imperious, isn't he? I suppose you give in to his whims, but the way to keep your charm over such a man is to deny him, to dispute with him—up-and-down quarrels, and the making up is delicious! Marriage is queer, isn't it, and the wrong people do get together! Is the old couplet true—

"There's a house 'tother side of the way,  
And there they make Lucifer matches?"

Another customer entered, and Polly turned to her.  
My parcel came. I paid for it and went out.

If Norman had not gone away would I have married him?

I did not know anything about marriage in that innocent childhood. Norman staying right along, and we growing nearer each other, reading the same books, enjoying thrilling or tender verses, walks and talks, and then—I knew there would not have been any repulsion, that I should have been glad, glad with supreme joy, just as Sophie had been.

I laid the package down on the table. Father was in his office, but I could not go in. I went up to our room, took off my bonnet and glanced around. Dan had been in and changed his clothes. Trousers thrown over a chair, collar and stock on the bureau, shoes and a soiled handkerchief on the floor. Dan had gone off somewhere. The most curious repulsion came over me. I could not touch one article to put them away. Oh, if I could run away somewhere—but there was father. Keeping together "as long as ye both do live."

"Ruth!" called father.

It might have been minutes or hours, it seemed an endless while to me.

"Did you get the paper? Come down. I want to make out some bills. Dan's gone to Batavia for two days, left his good-by. Why, Ruth, you look like a ghost, what is the matter?"

"Do I?" I tried to laugh, but my mouth was stiff, and I felt numb all over. "I don't think it anything. I may have walked too fast. The sun is hot."

He put me in the big rocking chair. I picked up a fan. I was cold enough, Heaven knew, but I wanted to make some movement.

"Ruth, I think you are not well. You grow thinner all the time, and you have no flesh to lose. We must have the doctor. Child, I have been comforting myself that matters were better with you——"

His kindly eyes were full of solicitude.

I made a great effort. "If you mean with Dan," I said, "they are. He is much pleasanter. I think he has gotten over the trouble about the house, though sometimes I have wondered whether he might not have it when I am gone."

"No," father replied, almost with set teeth. "You need not go for that. I'm not sure but it would be better for you to deed it back to me. Still if things go on, well——"

He hobbled to the closet and brought me some wine. That refreshed me. Then he opened the package, made out some bills, straightened his accounts when it was supper-time.

John came over in the evening, and father would keep him all night. I felt quite as well as usual. When I went upstairs I laid the soiled things away, hung up his trousers, but his vest fell to the floor, and his knife and pencil rolled out with a bit of paper. I put the two back, crumpled up the paper, then be-thought myself it might be a memorandum of some-

thing and spread it out, took it over to the candle. It was a pencil scrawl.

"You will find me at Weesaukie's lodge at twilight." It was not Dan's writing.

There was no name. He had taken Duke and gone in the buggy. Was he to have a companion? It turned me sick and cold again. Polly's glittering, mocking eyes and her insolent tones with their half veiled gayety swept over me. Was it—would it be Polly? Oh, no, no, Dan could not do such a thing as that!

For all Polly's brave show of mourning it was whispered that her married life had not been altogether serene, and that she made little ado about the loss of her grandeur.

All night something haunted me, a kind of impersonal agency, treacherous, trying to lure me somewhere in darkness and vagueness, while I had to make a great effort to hold back. And then I was wandering over wild, dreary prairie land, at last coming out to a strange black, silent lake. What splashed into it? The cry woke me, and my heart beat with a great terror.

"John," I said to the young cousin, "I want you to go down to the Morrison house this noon and take a note, but do not give it to any one except Polly. If she isn't home, and she may not be, you say it is all right, and be sure to bring the note back to me. Don't leave your name or anything. Come back to-night."

It was a daring thing if Polly was home.

I busied myself about household duties, and in the afternoon a neighbor came in with her two little ones. What made every one so anxious to know how much fortune Norman would have? Still I was glad of the break, for father had gone out to look after the men. The weather was fine and he was anxious to get in some of the crops. Then he took a rest in his easy chair.

I walked down the street a short distance. John came hurrying along whistling, but stopped, thrust his hand in his pocket.

"She wasn't home, Cousin Ruth. The woman wanted the note, but I wouldn't give it to her. She told me to come on Friday."

"Yes," I returned breathlessly. "Do not mention it to father," and I took the missive.

Then Polly was away as well!

Dan came home late Friday night, good natured, bustling, and announced that he must start early the next morning for Galena on some important business. He hoped I had not missed him much. He was sorry to go away at this busy season, but he would make it all right with father. Indeed, he began to think with so much business of his own they would really need a regular overseer.

"Now if that Gaynor boy was four or five years older, he might come."

I was thunderstruck. "I thought you did not like him," I half faltered.

"I don't, but your father seems to like him."

The tone was rather sarcastic. I made no reply. I

was glad he did not proffer me so much as a kiss. In five minutes he was asleep.

So to Galena he went the next morning after a brief colloquy with father.

"I'd like to know what's got into Dan Hayne," father said, almost angrily. "I s'pose he's had a streak of luck somewhere, he's gay as a lark, but he is sober enough, and I'm pretty sure he hasn't been off on a carouse. I suppose it is all right between you?" studying me sharply.

"It was all pleasant, if that is what you mean."

He nodded, but did not look satisfied.

"I'll have to hunt up Jake Esden—and I suppose he will be too busy to lend a hand. This kind of weather can't last. If I wasn't such a battered old hulk!"

I clasped my arms around his neck, but I did not sigh nor sob, though both rose in my heart. Whatever came it would be we two.

"We'll have a week to ourselves anyhow," he said, in a gratified tone.

A week in which to be glad that the husband of one's life would be away. What a bitter travesty it was. But this time Polly was home, making preparations to go to Vincennes for quite a stay.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### DAN

I WAS all alone that August afternoon. It was hot out on the porch and I took my sewing inside. I liked to sew when anything perplexed me. There seems a quiet kind of diversion in the effort one has to make, which is not much of an effort, after all. Father had gone down to the warehouse to see about loading one of the boats. One of the men was with him, though he had learned to get about quite comfortably.

I heard a step on the walk. Dan's week was up and he might be home any day. It had been a pleasant and busy week, and it seemed as if most of the people I had ever known had visited me. There was my old friend, Mrs. Chadwick, who had come for her brother. He was rather ailing now, and it was thought a change would benefit him, so she would take him home with her. She was still sweet and charming and intelligent and we had a pleasant visit. Sophie came up with the four children, and we enjoyed a merry, romping time. Of course, she couldn't let Polly alone, but she admitted the matter might have worn itself out, and now

she was preparing to take quite a journey. "Joy go with her," declared Sophie.

Ben had returned, a fine, fresh-looking fellow, tall and with a strong frame, rather thin now, but he was full of ambition. He had been doing very well, and oh, what joy it would be to see Norman, the most splendid fellow in the world. Any day he might arrive.

Chris, too, was full of delight. I had no time to brood over my own infelicities.

No one had come yet to-day. It was too warm for womenkind to go visiting even with the prospect of a supper in which they had had no hand.

So when I heard the step I did not stir, neither did I take the next stitch, but just listened for the voice. Chris had a way of beginning his conversation on the lowest step and talking all the way along. It must be Ben, stopping to pet the cat. Then I turned, but could not see who was in the hall, rose, and took a step forward, and then we stood face to face with all the years between. I was no longer a little girl, and this was a fine, resolute man, clear eyed, the strong features toned down by the tenderness and sympathy the years had demanded of him, a face one could trust to the death—Norman Hayne in his ripe manhood.

There came to me in that one instant a flash of awful knowledge that I had no right to. I swayed uncertainly. I put out my hand and all went dark before my eyes.

"Oh, Little Girl! Little Girl!"

The longing sweetness of the voice pierced my very soul, but I went plunging down some deep abyss. Was I really dying?

When I came to, Jolette and father and a neighbor stood there beside Norman.

"What was the matter?" I asked. "Why, I never fainted in my life."

"Once is always the first time," said Mrs. Miller, sententiously.

Father was pale with fright, and shook as if with an ague, while his eyes transfixed mine.

"I came upon her too suddenly," Norman explained. "I was so impatient, and I could not find any one."

"She has not been well of late," exclaimed father.

"And it has been a hot afternoon. Oh, how did you stand it?" and I caught his hand.

"I was in a tolerably cool place. There is a breeze coming up, and the sun has gone under a cloud."

"Yes. I think we might take her out on the porch," said Mrs. Miller. "Jolette, you carry the big rocking chair."

"I am all right," and I gave a tremulous little laugh. "Did I frighten you very much?"

"It was a pretty severe faint," Norman replied, still looking anxiously at me.

Mrs. Miller would lead me, though I could walk very well, and only felt a little shaky.

The wind came up in a fluttering sort of gale, as if it hardly knew whether to behave at its best or worst. A drift of mauve and dun began to settle in level lines along the west, making a bar across the sun. Other

patches of white and pale gray chased each other about, but there was no sign of shower.

"When did you get in?" asked father.

"About noon. I went straight to mother. Chris was home. Oh, you can't think how glad I am to be here. It has been a long exile from the many one loves. And yet I ought not complain. I have been needed every day of the time. But it seemed so strange at the first glance to have every one grown up, although, of course, I knew none of us stood still," and he laughed with a cheerful, musical sound. It was like a mellow echo of Dan's. And he was a refined and noble copy of his elder brother, a gentleman in tone, accent, the turn of the head, the glance of the eye, the sort of atmosphere that surrounded him. I thought I would like to have him more distinct in personality.

He remained to supper, but went immediately after. He wrung father's hand until the pressure made him wince, but he said a simple good-night to me, and I was thankful. I could not have borne the clasp of his hand.

There was great rejoicing, to be sure. We were very neighborly in those days, and joy as well as sorrow stirred all hearts. Then it was something to have been nearly all over Europe, to understand several foreign languages, to have seen kings and queens.

A few days after Dan came home. He gave me a careless greeting, and began to talk at once about Norman.

"I have not seen much of him," I said. "He and father went driving yesterday, and he was surprised at what he called the advancement of the prairies."

"Oh, I suppose he carries his head very high. And I dare say he came in for a big fortune. You won't see much of him here, I can tell you. We're not half grand enough."

"Your mother is a very happy woman. I went down there yesterday, while the men were out. I had been so busy with various matters. You must go and see her."

He nodded, and busied himself with some papers he was taking out of a drawer.

That was all our greeting after a week's absence. I had a kind of stunned feeling, and did not really care for endearments, though sometimes Dan was very lavish of them. I had not yet grown used to this revelation of myself. I must learn to love my husband, it was my only safeguard. Otherwise I should be a miserable, sinful woman. For I realized now how I had loved Norman Hayne through these years of my childhood, and how I could love him now, how he would fill the spaces in my heart that had never been satisfied. The pain and longing I had never understood before.

There was another aspect to the case. Father's influence had its share in the step I realized. He had not thought then he could live very long, and it was his dear love for me that longed to see me safe in some one's hands. He suffered enough in knowing that my husband had grown careless, he must never guess that

I could have given my supreme affection to another and been happy, blessed beyond measure.

Why had Dan married me?

He could not have been so much in love with an unformed child, though I think I did amuse him with my petulance and protests. He loved to conquer anything. He could subdue the most fractious horse and do more with an obstinate mule than any one else. He really enjoyed my resistance. But was there any thought that at father's death I should be left with quite a fortune? There was his anger about the house, his objections to young John Gaynor. Yet now they seemed matters almost of indifference to him.

But there was my duty and my safety. Father was a very upright man and used to clear distinctions, and I knew I had inherited them. I was a wife and I had no right to consider what my life might have been with any other man, to brood over what I had missed.

It seemed truly as if Norman helped me. Had I done or said anything in that moment of the lapsing of consciousness? He came only when father was around. Oh, what talks there were out on the porch, to which I listened enchanted, yet I sat a little by myself, or with father's arm around me. Mrs. Hayne gathered the family together, and father went along. Four sweet, merry grandchildren, Sophie bright, commonplace to be sure, but a most excellent wife and mother. We talked of the one who "was not," of the night I had come a Little Girl, of the many delightful old things.

Dan was there, but I noted a curious restlessness

about him, as if he was bored, and an abstraction. His thoughts certainly were elsewhere, yet he told droll stories and anecdotes and chaffed Norman. When we made ready to return Ben said he would go along, he had an errand uptown. We were old enough to divide our city in sections already.

"Ben—if you'll just see my folks safe home," he said, "I'll be mightily obliged to you. I ought to see some one on business, and I know I can catch him tonight."

"Yes," assented Ben, and then Chris said he would go, too. Norman was petting and playing with little Ruth.

Dan walked a short distance with us and then turned off with a cheerful good-night. But it was past midnight when he returned.

It seemed so strange to walk on the edge of some suspected but unknown danger, as if the ground was mined somewhere along the way. I was outwardly cheerful, I sang about the house, I tried to answer blithely, I cooked the things Dan liked, I begged him to come home early. I indulged in little caressing ways, such as he used to fairly extort years before. I put on whatever semblance of love I could use without being effusive. It did not warm him at all, and he had been so easily roused. What was this stone that I surged against?

"Ruth," father said one morning, "what is Dan about, "has he told you of any new plans?"

"No," I answered in a kind of surprise.

"He is putting money in the copper mines up at Lake

Superior. He has sold that Lake Street property, at a sacrifice, I think, and he asked me for a settlement. He wants to go up to the copper fields himself."

"No, I have heard nothing about it."

Father came nearer and took both of my hands.

"Ruth, you cannot go up there, even with your husband," he exclaimed solemnly.

"He has not asked me. I do not think he would want me." Yet I shuddered at the prospect.

"One cannot fathom him any more. Of course, he was very plausible and all that, considering my interest, and saying he had not time to attend to it, that he might be away for months, and that now I was so much improved a good overseer would answer my purpose. But I say again he shall not take you. I would as soon hand you over to a pack of ravening wolves! Oh, my darling, I have no one in the world but you, a broken, disabled, lonely old man."

He pressed me to his heart, and I felt the sob there. The strong arms about me gave me inexpressible comfort.

"You need not fear," I returned. "He shall not even drag me away."

"He will not try force. He may try fraud. I distrust him. He used to be so frank and outspoken. Will you be careful? Do not be trapped into anything, for he is deep as the sea. It may be all this copper business. I have seen men go mad about speculation before, when they could dance a hornpipe standing on their heads, their brains were so befuddled. It is not drink, but some curious influence I cannot divine."

"I shall stay with you always. It was one of the conditions of my marriage. It was as solemn a promise as anything else."

"Thank God, my darling."

There certainly was what I should call an intense change in Dan, not any superficial emotion. He sometimes sat with his lips compressed, and his brow in a frown, then it would suddenly lighten in such a wonderful glow, an absolute radiance. What was he thinking of?

Once, when I saw it, I went over and kissed him in a kind of fascinated mood.

"Don't!" He pushed me away roughly.

A month before I would have cried, and felt stabbed to the heart. Now I walked quietly away.

What weeks they were, not many of them, but the days seemed shodden with lead, the sun hung high in the heavens, as if loth to leave her throne.

I stayed mostly at home, helping father to go over accounts. I remember the last week. Norman was not in at all.

Was I longing for him? Was life drearier without him? Well, if I was as weak as that then I must make a new and greater effort. But it was fighting with no line of defence behind me, no husband to stretch out a hand.

Dan came in awhile before noon one day and began to pack a valise. He had taken away some of his belongings before. I had been mending a few articles rather too bulky to be carried downstairs.

"I am going away," he announced, "up to Lake Superior. The Prairie Bird starts this afternoon."

"Oh, Dan!" What should I say? "How long are you likely to stay?" and I tried to make my voice solicitous.

There was no answer for a moment or two. Then he turned around in a fierce fashion, and his eyes were black as night.

"I may as well tell you," he began in a desperate tone, "that I am not coming back at all."

I glanced up at him. I knew the color went out of my face. I was so utterly amazed.

"You'll hear the story, but I may as well have the gratification of telling you." His voice had a peculiar depth, and his face was set with some tremendous emotion. "I am going with the woman I love, and who loves me with a passion you never could know if you lived a hundred years! I should have married her in the beginning, but I was a blind, idiotic fool, and she had a temper. We were never sure of each other. She made a pretence of caring for this or that one when I ought to have wrung the secret out of her heart and mastered her once for all. A woman like that gives royally when she is compelled. You have to extort it out of her, but the drop of honey is worth it all. The old man who took her in hand never found the way to the heart of the flower. That was saved for me. And it is a delicious draught. We are going away together—we shall never come back. What people say is of no importance to us."

"It is Polly Morrison," I gasped. "Oh, Dan, if you loved her, then why did you marry me?" I cried, wounded to the heart's core.

"Because I was a fool. She had gone out of my life, and I said she could not have loved me as she professed. And you were a silly little white kitten, never quite sure whether you would jump on my knee or not, so I made you. But what is there to you? Some cold Puritan blood, some petty sort of tenderness that has no fire in it—nothing to kindle a man to the height of rapture. I tired of you even before she came, and then my life was set aflame. She is the one woman for me. A month, even, with her would outweigh any other woman on the face of the earth."

I sprang up. "Dan, your solemn promise!" At that moment I hated to be thrust aside for Polly Morrison. "You were not compelled to marry me. You—you did love me then—a little."

He laughed scornfully. "You have just hit it—a little. A man sometimes takes second best, more fool he! You might have done if Polly with all her witchery had not crossed my path. Or it might have been some one else. There is no need of making a fuss now. I have not wasted any of your patrimony. You can hand it all over to John Gaynor if you like, and you and your father can maunder on through life. And I shall have a glowing, thrilling, absorbing atmosphere, in which one really lives. No, don't come near me—"

The bed had stood between us as I sat by the window. Perhaps I had unconsciously stepped forward. I had a wild idea that I must plead, that I must exert all my wifely powers to keep him from committing this dreadful sin.

"Don't come near me," he continued. "We will say good-by with this space between us and no tomfoolery. Perhaps I was idiotic to come and tell you this, but I wanted you to know how the other woman was loved, how a man loves when a woman fills every thought of his soul. There—you and your father are well rid of me!"

He picked up his valise and strode out of the room, down the stairs. I dropped on the bed. I did not faint or cry. I could hardly be any more deserted than I had been the last two months. A deserted wife! A husband by all of God's sacred ordinances who gloried in his shameful love for another woman!

It stunned me. One moment it seemed incredible, then his voice sounded clear and vibrant, as if he was still in the room. Had we parted for all time? A hundred little tendernesses rushed over me. The laughing, teasing eyes that could hold so much meaning looked into mine. Oh, he must have loved me once and I had tried to love him, yes, sometimes I really had, but it was a child's love.

"Ain't any one comin' to dinner, Mis' Hayne?" A peremptory voice rang up the stairway.

I rose, bathed my face, although there were no tears to wash away, and went down.

"Mr. Hayne gone away?" inquired Jolette.

"Yes," I answered briefly.

"An' ye'r father out! I declar' to man ther' ain't much sense roastin' ye'sself on a hot day an' no one to come an' eat the wittles!"

I glanced over the table. The boiled dinner with one

or two side dishes filled me with disgust, and yet I thought how Dan would have enjoyed it. He was hearty in everything. He had a big frame to take care of and he did not stint it.

The wagon drove up and Sim helped father out. So I waited until he was ready to come.

"The Prairie Bird starts out at two. Has Dan been home?"

"Yes, and gone," I made answer briefly.

He glanced sharply at me. Jolette was too near for any private comment.

"I saw him down by the elevator. Well, I hope he isn't on a wild-goose chase that will bring down only a few feathers. Wentworth thinks he's years too early, but they may find gold up there as well as in California, and copper may pan out in a valuable way. But I think he was foolish putting so many eggs in one basket. He's sold Duke to Baubein."

"He cared more for Chita."

"There's big money in Duke. He's a splendid trotter."

I tried to eat. Father was hungry, and just as the pie came on Ben entered and had some dessert, and there followed a long talk with father, who then settled himself in an easy chair for his nap.

Had Dan really told the truth? Was Polly to be his companion? How would it come out? At all events, I would keep my own counsel.

It had been a pretty warm day until about five, when some suspicious clouds went scurrying across the sky, and a blast of wind seemed to come off of an iceberg.

We shut down the windows, the storm rushed up so quickly. Then the wind fell. In a little while there was such a peculiar light, not sunset, it obscured the sun even, a strange yellow glow over everything, darkening and yet not making dark. The air was now very still. Men went hurrying homeward.

"There'll be a big storm," one and another said when they came within hearing. I thought of the two out on the lake and how Dan disliked the water.

There had been a curious talk about the end of the world coming. Jolette was afraid, and up in her room prayed mightily.

"It is strange," father said over and over again, and he watched me closely.

After a while it grew paler and that gave everything an unearthly glow. Yet it looked beautiful. It was nothing like sunset, I had never seen such a light before. The distant cornfields were simply magnificent. Trees looked as if they were painted on a background, every branch and twig were so distinctly outlined.

Then by slow degrees it faded, growing into evening gradually. There had been no sunset, but night was coming on quietly and the sky was a smooth gray.

Ben rushed in breathless.

"Hasn't it all been queer?" he exclaimed. "Mother was sure the end of the world was here. They've been preaching it a good deal to the eastward. Norme insisted I should come up and stay all night with you." How good the old name sounded! "He could manage mother better. I never saw her so frightened. Were you?"

"Well—the world is going to be destroyed by fire, but it wasn't hot enough to melt the fervent elements, so I thought we were safe," replied father jocosely.

Then they began about the prophecies, and how in the first century they thought Christ would come the second time before St. John died. Father had been quite a great Bible reader of late years. We spoke of Dan, too, and hoped he would reach his destination safely. Evidently Ben nor mother had any idea he had gone to stay, or that there was anything wrong. I almost persuaded myself I had dreamed that cruel, brutal talk. It had been interspersed with not a little profanity. I hated swearing.

We went to bed at length. I felt so sore and sad then, with all my life in ruins, that I cried softly on my pillow. A deserted wife! And when the story came out, how hard all the gossip would be to hear!

The Yankee clock in the hall rattled off its hours. It always struck as if it might lose a second of time between the strokes. Twelve! The eerie hour. What if a ghost came to me! Oh, what was that!

An awful roar of something coming nearer and nearer and then breaking into a thousand shrieks. I sprang out of bed and screamed.

Father called to me, "Come in here, Ruth," and I ran, frightened almost out of life.

I suppose there had been such tempests before. I know there have been since. Ben came in wrapped in a blanket and lighted some candles, then sat on the foot of father's bed. It was something terrific. The house rocked, we heard the trees crash down, the cries

of the animals and the frightened poultry, and that mighty roar and swirl as if the destruction of the world had begun. We were so near the lake that we guessed what an ocean tempest must be with the great waves pounding up, fighting each other like angry armies.

Then it began to rain. A great fierce deluge, this way and that, whirling, beating, changing about, thrashing, as if it meant to crush out life, the world, everything. Oh, what torrents! It stamped on the ground in its rage. It beat on the roof as if it meant to crush it in, and was all the uglier for being foiled.

I snuggled up to father and pressed my cheek against his. His arm was around me. We two, henceforth, always. And what of the other two? I felt the boat must have put in somewhere. It should have been a magnificent night with the moon just past the full. I thought of the ride on Chita in the harvest moonlight. Other tender remembrances came back to me, and from the depths of my soul I cried to God for their safety, cried mightily, as if my own soul was at stake.

It was two before the storm began to abate at all, then it rained steadily, and the wind raged, but not so fiercely, the lake roared like a great booming cannon, but the house had stood the shock and we were safe. It had been so good to have Ben. Yet it was curious we had none of us once spoken Dan's name, though I think it was deep in our hearts.

The skies were still thick in the morning, as if layer after layer had to roll away before it could clear. The wind had mostly ceased, and the rain held up now and then and came in gusts again.

Oh, the destruction that greeted us! The lake had been loosed it seemed and swept over everything. Streets were rivers, some houses had been carried off their foundations. We were on higher ground, but there was only a short distance between us and this great sea the wind had stirred up.

About ten the clouds began to lift a little and patches of blue struggled here and there and were submerged again. Poor Jolette had gone almost crazy and really had not wit enough left to get breakfast. Ben and I helped, but all the life had been wrenched out of me. One of the outbuildings had gone over, but the barn and stable and hennery were intact.

By noon Norman came over, waded over, for he was mud up to his knees. The instant I looked into his kindly, pitying eyes I felt he shared my secret. I did not dare give him a second glance, for I knew I should cry out in anguish.

After an hour or two the sun came out, as if quite ashamed of the destruction the wretched myrmidons of storm had wrought. And we heard how wharves and storehouses had been submerged, vessels torn away and wrecked, swept down to the end of the lake, and such destruction as had never come upon us before, as there had not been so much to destroy.

It was several days before the damage could really be estimated. The waters subsided, the lake took her mud and ooze and overflow. The sun shone as if it was glad to help dry up and restore, and the blue skies smiled, the winds seemed as if led by a child.

Some of the corn had been cut and stacked, and the

rest, though beaten down, was so fully ripened there would not be a great loss. Most of the grains had been cut and housed.

"I declare, Gaynor, you do have the best luck of any one I know," said a neighbor.

It seemed so. Father was really a rich man, but most of it had come through thrift.

I felt weak and miserable. I was holding my breath for some blow that would surely strike, and when I looked in any one's face I felt as if I must scream.

Norman came up on the porch one afternoon. I was walking slowly downstairs, and halted in the hall. I did not hear what father asked, but Norman answered:

"Yes. They have heard. The Prairie Bird ran ashore on some rocks that stove a hole in her, and then was blown out to sea again. Only a few were saved, two or three of the sailors. But that isn't the worst news to face. It is going all over now. Poor Ruth! If she might never know! For—how can I tell it? My own brother, too!"

I stepped out. I suppose I must have looked like a ghost. Norman stretched out his arms, but I tottered to father.

"I know," I said, trying to steady my voice that seemed blown about by the stress of emotion. "Dan told me that day. They loved each other and went away together."

"And were found dead, locked in each other's arms."

I fell over into father's chair. That was the last I knew for a long while.

## CHAPTER XIX

### HOW NORMAN CAME HOME

THOSE years abroad had been very precious years to me in spite of the great disappointment of not returning home at the promised time. I found Mr. Le Moyne a charming gentleman, and was not made in any degree a servant, but treated like a relative. I knew afterward that he took a great fancy to me from what Mr. Harris said, and, as he told me, "he liked my face." I kept accounts for him, wrote letters, read aloud, studied and wrote to the Little Girl and my mother as often as I could. She was such an innocent little girl, and so sweet, so altogether different from the girls I had come in contact with.

When we went to Washington, where Mr. Le Moyne was entrusted with a very delicate mission that was not to be put into writing, he decided to go abroad at once, as his eyes were causing him great uneasiness. We would not need to remain more than a year, he thought. But months passed, he was improving so much that the oculist thought he ought not break with the treatment. It was one thing and another. He came to depend so wholly upon me. And I never had

the courage to tell him I had left a little girl in Chicago that I desired sometime to make my wife.

I used to say things in letters that I hoped she would take up, that might pique her curiosity, but they did not rouse her. If I wrote to her, and she had no especial love for me, that would end it. And how hard it would be to have a long engagement. I was a little afraid of my brother Ben, who had somehow stepped into my place, yet it seemed mean to grudge him any happiness if he could win her. Then Mr. Le Moyne's health began to break and his eyesight fail, with some new complication. He asked me never to leave him while he lived. I could not deny him. So I trusted my Little Girl to God. If she was for me it would all come right in time. I was having a rich, full life and developing in many directions. I did have a great deal of the finest enjoyment.

But when I heard that Dan had married my darling Ruth I was as one struck dumb with amazement. He was a big, strong, burly fellow, full of life and jollity, and not over-refined. But then I reflected Chicago was not Paris, or London, or Rome, or Florence. It was a hard blow to me. I had no duty left but to devote myself to my benefactor. No father and son could have lived in finer accord, or had tastes more in unison. I was glad that I could comfort him in his misfortune.

His health failed gradually, and the end came in peace. He had dealt very generously by me. I found it would take a long time to settle the estate, and resolved to return home for part of a year at least.

How everything had changed! Chicago had made great strides, increased her business, widened her borders. Fresh from beautiful cities that had taken hundreds of years in their growth, this had hardly begun. What was a place thirty or so years old compared to their centuries of advancement!

Dickens had been over and touched up the West with his caustic pen. Many people in Europe seemed to think we as a nation were reverting to the Indian type and lived in wigwams. I was astonished at times at the little our neighbors really knew about us, compared with our knowledge of the different European countries.

After all my fascinating rambling about, and my different attainments, this was home, and a man's birthplace and his boyhood remembrances are always dear to him. Two lines of a poem credited to Stoddard always suggest this meeting to me:

"My mother fell on my neck and wept,  
She kissed me and then she sighed,  
And our hearts were filled with a silent grief  
For \* \* \* \* the one who had died,"

and that was father.

Chris was home to supper. Homer and his wife came in. Sophie had been a great friend of the Little Girl's I remembered. Oh, how dear and sweet it was. Mother kept studying me—she had in her mind the boy who went away.

All the next morning the house was thronged with callers. Mother was proud as a queen. Then I ran away and went over to the Gaynors', hoping they had

not heard. I had my wish. There seemed no one at home. The doors stood hospitably open and I entered. Then I caught sight of the girl who had never been out of my mind all these years. I came upon her unaware, and we stood face to face reading the inmost secrets of each other's souls, knowing what might have been, what we had lost. She put out her hand a little blindly and then she fell into my arms. I caught her and saved her from dropping on the floor.

I carried her to the settle and laid her down. She was as beautiful as any statue I had ever seen. The straight Greek nose with its thin nostrils, the rounded chin with a faint dimple, the perfect brows, the tendrils of hair that were like cloud-like vapor, so light and showing the white skin through. I glanced a moment, then I kissed her with the pent-up love of years, brow and lids with their long brown lashes, mouth and chin, but she lay like a form in marble, as if the tenderest passion could not rouse her.

Then I called for help. A black woman came, and, frightened, she ran for a neighbor. I tried chafing the hands. I called her endearing names, and then I remembered she was my brother's wife, but she was my darling, nevertheless.

When Mrs. Miller came, Jolette, the black woman, skirmished up a bottle of liniment and one of camphor.

"Is there any brandy or whiskey?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," and she went for that. Just then John Gaynor came in, and it seemed as if he would faint as well. But between us all we presently had her restored.

"I took her too suddenly," I began in apology.

"What did she say?" He eyed me sharply.

"She had not time for even a word of welcome," I answered. "Is she well?"

He shook his head with a reluctant dubiousness. "I'm afraid she isn't quite," was the slow reply.

I noticed then that she was very thin. You could see the blue veins in her arms and hands as well as her temples.

She made light of it, though I understood she was a little frightened, as she had never fainted before. Then Mrs. Miller suggested we take her out on the porch, where it was cooler, and we packed her in a rocking chair. I fanned her slowly. Her father placed his chair beside her. How he did love her. It shone in every line of his face, which seemed to have taken on a certain kind of refinement that had perhaps come from the invalidism. I noticed that he used great care in sitting down and getting up, and that he was very lame.

I was fain to go away, not that I really wanted to, but Mr. Gaynor insisted on my staying to supper. Dan was absent, and he plied me so with questions that we were summoned to supper before I had answered half of them. Afterward we went out again. Ruth had the chair tilted back almost like a couch. How slim and graceful she was, most like to a willow wand. And her sweet face told the story to me that she was trying to make herself happy and content in a life that did not fill her heart, and was slowly sapping her strength.

How we talked all the evening. She held her

father's hand—it showed little marks of toil now and was shapely enough, but not as white as hers. And when I went away John Gaynor wrung my hand with subtle, meaning strength.

"You will come in often," he said. "We are so glad to get you back."

How had these two people come to marry? I learned some of the causes afterward. I was anxious to see her and Dan together.

I had warm enough welcomes everywhere. The interviewer had not come into existence, but I went to the office of the *Prairie Farmer* and saw young John. Then there was the *Journal*, a new friend in what was then the Saloon Building. There was a daily *Tribune*, rather shaky on its legs, in an old wooden shanty at Lake and Clark streets. The Hon. John Wentworth, of my father's old love, the *Democrat*, was on La Salle Street in quite grand quarters, the printing room boasting a Hoe press from New York. And there was a bookstore, laying a foundation of one of the great publishing houses in years to come.

There was the old jail built, as the contract called for, "of logs firmly bolted together," and the Court House I had never seen before, on the northeast corner of the square. It had offices on the lower floor, but they were talking of a new one, as it was too small. There was gas in some of the principal streets. But the wharves and the grain elevator had improved most of all, and the packing house was quite an institution. Railroads were planned in almost every direction and the canal was an established fact.

Dan returned a few days after. He was a big, handsome animal, not gross, but with the material in every line, the intellectual in scarcely none. He was shrewd, jolly, forceful in all business matters, and had a laughing face that won more by its good humor than his argument. I had once thought he might be something of a politician, but he was all business. Ben would take up that line. Our Senators were Messrs. Douglas and Shields, the Stephen A. Douglas I had gone to hear speak long ago. They had won a grant of land from Congress for a railroad from Chicago to the Gulf of Mexico.

The gold fields had not taken as many of our men as I fancied it would. The unfortunate revolutions in Germany and Hungary had sent an influx of immigrants over, many well-informed people among them, ready and anxious to work for homes in the new country, many of them farmers.

Mother was a very happy woman. I am not sure but Chris came the nearest to her heart. He was her last baby, and he had a religious tendency that harmonized strongly with her now. She was proud to have him preparing for the life of a clergyman. Homer's children were her delight. They were merry, pretty things and in exuberant health.

She felt somehow curiously about Dan, though his marriage had not settled him quite as much as she had hoped. Ruth was a lovely wife, but it was a pity there were no children, when there was likely to be so much money on both sides.

Because I loved her so and had been betrayed into

that one impassioned moment I was very careful. I went there when I was almost sure Mr. Gaynor would be around. And Dan, I found, was seldom home of an evening. Both Ruth and her father never tired of hearing about my travels and Mr. Le Moyne.

Then a curious whisper seemed to pervade the air about Dan, that he went a good deal to the Morrisons'. He had been making some investments for Polly. I ventured to call one day, but the house was shut up. Polly went out very little among her old friends, it seemed. It was reported that her rich marriage had not left her a rich widow.

Dan was very much interested in the copper at Lake Superior, and planning to make a journey thither. But Sophie one day roused my indignation by telling me that Dan spent nearly every evening at the Morrisons', and that occasionally Polly stole out to a lane below, little frequented, and met Dan and drove off with him.

I knew after seeing Dan and Ruth together a few times that whatever love he had once had for her no longer existed. He was not rough to her, but cruelly indifferent. Did she still care for him, or was this only a semblance, this sweet devotion that would have won any man's heart twice over? She clung so closely to her father. There never could be a tenderer affection.

One evening I resolved to learn the truth of Sophie's story. From the Gaynors' I went down to the Morrisons', a long walk. The house was all in darkness except a faint glimmer at the kitchen end. I crept softly up, when a low growl from a bulldog fairly curdled

my blood. I could not see where he was, and retraced my steps cautiously. The next day I planned differently. I stationed myself at an intersection of streets, they were not much beside lanes, and sat down under a tree to wait. There was no moon, and at first a rather hazy sky, but it cleared presently into magnificent starlight.

From my point I could see down to the house. It was all a blur at first, but by degrees I became so accustomed to it that I could discern the outlines of all between. A tree partly hid the side, but the front was dimly visible.

It was ten when I took up my vigil. Eleven, half-past. Perhaps I was on a fool's errand. Then—yes, there were two figures stepping out in the open space. They found parting such "sweet sorrow" that it seemed as if they would say "Good-night 'til it were morrow." Their arms were about each other, their faces turned from me, but close together. A long, long embrace, then Dan started away swiftly.

I rose. He took the other way, but I stepped over there.

"Dan," I exclaimed, steady voiced, "Dan!"

"Who the devil are you?" sharply.

"Norman Hayne, and I want to talk with you. I know where you spend nearly every evening."

Dan whipped out his pistol and uttered an oath. "You've been spying on me, and it's the last time you'll spy on anybody, you mean sneak."

I put up my hand. We were facing each other, and we were both of a height. My heart was unprotected.

"See here, Dan," I said calmly, "you could shoot me and my dead body might be found in the morning. That is not all. Before noon Chicago would know the name of the murderer and his connection with the woman down there. If you are willing to yield up your life and draw down obloquy on the woman you have just left, then shoot."

Dan still held the pistol.

"That devil of a Gaynor put you on the track, curse him," in a vengeful tone.

"No, I do not think he suspects such a thing. He imagines you at the hotel talking business and playing cards, and he is proud that you come home sober. It is from this neighborhood the report has spread. You have taken her out driving. Your true wife that you must have cared for when you married owns your fealty. I do not need to read you a lecture, you know what you are doing and the end will be a scandal that will not raise you in any one's estimation and break her heart. It will also drag down the other woman."

"A miserable puling, white-livered thing who has no heart to break, who cares nothing for love, could not understand it!" he flung out.

"Why did you marry her? Why not have taken Polly at first?" I questioned sternly.

"Because I was a blind, dumb fool all the way through. And when she married I thought that the end of it."

"And when you married, that was the honorable end of it."

"No, it wasn't the end at all. Love with fire in it

may smoulder, but it breaks out into a flame if one stirs among the ashes."

Dan suddenly put away his pistol.

"See here, Norme, I'll admit the whole thing is wrong. But a love like that sweeps a man off his feet. I'm going away presently and shall be absent two or three months, and maybe I'll get over it. You see, Polly had some troublesome business to settle. She wasn't left at all well off by that miserable old weasel of a Frenchman. I made some investments for her, and somehow her story was a sad one and she had been my old love, and now that I am going away—Ruth is good enough, but she isn't my kind. Maybe up there all alone I'll straighten matters out and come to my senses, and when I return things may go better with us. Polly and her mother are going to Vincennes to live. She doesn't feel at home in this old mud hole any more. So that's the whole of it. I'm all-fired sorry, Norman, that I went at you so, but the thought of being spied upon made me thundering mad."

The whole thing rang false. Yet I could not contradict it. He *was* going away. About Polly I could not tell. Perhaps she had planned to follow him.

"Dan," I said—"on your word and honor?"

"As God hears me," he answered solemnly.

"You would break your mother's heart as well, and disgrace us all. And the way Ruth looks, it doesn't seem to me you will have to wait long for your freedom. She is almost transparent."

"Oh, those thin people are wiry. She's always looked so. She'll live to be eighty."

"She was a rosy little girl."

"Well, you just trust me, I've given my word."

Here was where I had to turn off to mother's, and we said good-night.

Dan was not home the next evening, but if he went to the Morrisons' he took another way and entered by the garden. And there was a bright light in the parlor that fronted the street.

I could only wait. I knew people bent on an intrigue could outwit the keenest eyes.

Dan came over to say good-by to mother, and was so tender it brought tears to her eyes as she told it over. He was most cordial to Sophie and the children. I went down to see him off and he shook hands in a friendly manner. It was a splendid day. I thought I would go to the Morrisons' that evening to see if all was right, but there came up a curious threatening blow. I spent the evening with mother. She was very proud of Dan and was delighted to think he had given up drinking to any excess. Liquor drinking was a very common thing even among respectable people, but drunkenness was beginning to be frowned upon.

About midnight the storm broke. We did not feel it so much here, but the roar of the elements was something frightful. I am sure I had never known such a storm. The wreck and damage were terrible. Mother was almost crazy about Dan.

I made my way to the Gaynors' about mid-afternoon. Their house was solidly built of brick and they had suffered very slight damage. Ruth was a pale little ghost and her sapphire-blue eyes asked wordless

questions. None of us spoke of the Prairie Bird. It was too soon to hear.

The lake seemed strewn with wrecks. At the warehouses everybody was appalled. The only hope was that any boat seeing the storm coming up would run to shelter.

Four days afterward a sailor, escaped from the wreck, came into Chicago and told the story. Of the bodies that were beaten up ashore there were two locked in each other's arms—Dan Hayne and Polly Maseurier—and they were buried together. The best cabin had been engaged for her and she had come aboard in the morning. They had partaken of a gay supper together, and now it seemed half the men suspected she would flit with him. He had been selling out his Galena interest and most of his property. Chita had been taken with them, and she, too, had found a watery grave.

I must go to the Gaynors before some one rudely bruited the tragedy to them. John Gaynor could break the news more tenderly to his child. I was glad to find him on the porch in the old reclining chair, reading his paper.

I don't remember how I told it. I think I left something to be inferred. I did not hear Mr. Gaynor's question, for a white wraith glided out on the porch. The soft light hair framed in the sweet, deathlike face, but the clear eyes shone out with an unearthly light. I would have caught her, but she went straight to her father.

"I know," she said, and her voice was like a low-

toned bell shaken wildly about. "Dan told me that day. They loved each other and went away together."

Then she fell into her father's lap.

I lifted her to the settle, limp and lifeless. It seemed as if she had lost all her flesh during these days that she had carried her secret. Was her heart broken? My poor Little Girl! My poor Little Girl!

I went for the doctor presently. All night she lapsed from one faint to another, and was left as near lifeless as any human body could be. Mr. Gaynor watched her dry eyed, but with such an expression of despair as is seldom concentrated in any countenance. He would place his cold hand in mine, that was so vigorous and warm, that I felt almost ashamed. I had given her up to Dan, I could not give her up to death.

After two days fever set in. It was not raging or violent, but the lassitude was painful to witness. The boys were both going away, and I persuaded mother to shut her house and come up. Her sorrow was heart-breaking, but she knew it was still worse for Ruth.

The result of the storm was being cleared away and repaired. There was a good deal of talk, to be sure, and the men who had liked Dan best blamed Polly bitterly. Others did not see how he could have thrown up his prospects for any woman, for it was admitted if all went well with Mr. Gaynor and Chicago Ruth would be no mean heiress.

Sad as it was to watch day and night with only a mere thread of hope, it took mother and Ruth out of the head of the gossip. I looked after Mr. Gaynor's affairs as well as I could, and there were some matters

of Dan's left unsettled. He must have taken a considerable amount of money with him, but whether it was in the bottom of the lake or buried with him no one was ever to know.

After a month or so Ruth began to evince a slow improvement. "If she had enough strength to pull through," the doctor said with a faint inflection in his voice that sounded like hope to the waiting, longing ear. She could not have had a tenderer nurse than mother, and womanly care and sympathy exceeds that of the most loving man.

Through this time I learned by bits and snatches how this ill-fated marriage had come about. And although at first Mr. Gaynor could have rejoiced over Dan's untimely end, he had built high hopes on him and would have loved him like a son. Even now he referred to the kindly things Dan had done for him in his illness, and I could see Dan had held many fascinations for him. But when he wanted to get all the property interests into his hands and began to treat Ruth with indifference all the fatherly feelings were roused. Then he had grudged young John Gaynor the relationship.

I could not but admire the wise and kindly reticence he observed in speaking of Dan. Of course there was no glossing over the last cruel insult to Ruth, but poor Dan had paid for it with his life, Polly as well.

I had many plans in my mind through this time. Go back to Paris I must. The boys had gone to their different institutions, and that left mother alone. Homer wanted her to rent the house and live with

them. Then in watching Mr. Gaynor it seemed to me that something might still be done for him. Surgery in Paris had made rapid strides. There were splendidly equipped hospitals, perhaps I might find them in New York or Philadelphia, but I could not go there to stay. If I might take them all to Paris with me, mother as companion and chaperone for Ruth.

I advanced my plans very cautiously. Ruth's welfare was my first point. She did not get along rapidly. The doctor had insisted on having her beautiful hair cut, and it was now a mass of rings, like silken floss. She seemed to have gone back to childhood, her face was so small and wore such a look of timid entreaty. Her eyes were still like the midnight blue of the sky and their expression penetrated one's very soul with their infinite pathos.

Mr. Gaynor at first considered a journey abroad for himself an impossibility with his farming interest. It did puzzle me a little to know how this could be managed. And, when I was about discouraged in my search for a capable person Providence sent him right in my way. Since the unfortunate struggle in Hungary we had received many immigrants of the better class who had largely drifted to the West in search for land. Homer had taken a young man to work for him when he had spent his little all. He and his father had been successful wheat growers, but their farms had been confiscated. The young man had left his wife and two little ones and the mother with friends, hoping soon to be able to send for them, but they found it very hard to get at anything without money.

I asked them to come over and spend an evening with us. John Gaynor was much interested in them, for both were intelligent, though speaking rather broken English. They discussed the possibility of buying government land and tilling it, and exploited their own methods, which were not behind ours, but their markets were.

The upshot of this was at the proper time my plan of having them as overseers, living in the house and looking after everything.

"It would be a godsend to them," said Mr. Gaynor. "They could get quite forehanded. These are the kind of citizens we need."

I left the leaven to work without any needless stirring up. Then I sought to persuade my mother that it was her duty to go for Ruth's sake. Since one of ours had so nearly wrecked her life surely we ought to strive to repair it.

"An old country woman like me," she cried in a kind of indignation. "A woman who has baked and brewed, and washed and ironed, milked and churned, and spun and spent the best of her life waiting on men-folk! A pretty sight I would be to go to Paris!"

"We should not expect to live at court," I laughed. "I was quite an ignorant lad when I went there. And if it was best for both Ruth and her father? She could not go without you."

It did take a good deal of argument and persuasion as well as good temper, but at last I gained my point. We had the father, Michael Sontieff, come and stay with us and found him clear minded and a really able

man. They could send for the family at once. The mother and the young wife had some money of their own and were most anxious to rejoin their husbands.

So the matter was settled to my great delight. Ruth was willing to do anything. I did not like the apathy, though it was so sweet one could not chide her.

Mother was still an energetic woman. And now that there was some real work devolving upon her, she was happy and cheerful. Her best belongings were sent to Sophie's and her house rented. She packed away the choicest of the Gaynors', she looked up the articles and clothing we needed for our journey.

"I feel as if I was going on a fool's errand," said John Gaynor emphatically, "but if Ruth can recover her health and forget the sad tragedy I shall be repaid."

The Sontieffs came in delighted. Young John was most loth to have us go. He had the making of a newspaper man in him, he would never have been a successful practical farmer.

We went to New York, and the middle of April we sailed for Liverpool. It was a pleasant voyage and the ocean trip did seem to revive the drooping Little Girl.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE PASSING OF OLD CHICAGO

THAT two years abroad was like a happy dream, the romance of our lives. Everything was queer to my travellers at first. Ruth made amusing attempts at French, of which she did know a little. Mother would have none of the "gibberish."

When we were quite domesticated I consulted several surgeons, who examined Mr. Gaynor. The limb, they thought, had not been rightly set. They would not say it could be altogether remedied, but that it could be greatly improved, though the process would be tedious, and perhaps take three months.

That time was not discouraging. We had come to the merciful period of anæsthesia, so the conscious suffering was reduced. He decided to undertake it. The prospect of going without a crutch was most tempting.

During that period mother, Ruth and I took various delightful journeys about the environs of Paris. It was in the early days of the third Napoleon and Paris was very brilliant. Many improvements had been

made, and my two guests were filled with amazement. There was so much beauty on every hand.

After the first fortnight we were allowed to see Mr. Gaynor. The surgeon admitted that it had been a rather serious case, and the operation would be the means of prolonging his life, which could not have gone on much longer without a fatal issue. I thanked Heaven that I had been so importunate. After ten weeks the patient came home. He was not to give up his crutch immediately, but he could bear some weight on his foot, which would have to be provided with a cork soled shoe, as his leg had shortened somewhat.

I was quite engrossed with Mr. Le Moyne's business until along in the winter. Then we went to Spain, and saw Madrid, Granada and other famous cities; the great fortress at Gibraltar, and crossed the beautiful sea to the Bay of Naples, sojourned a brief while in Florence and Rome, went up into Switzerland, Germany, Holland, then down to Paris again, where I received my fortune. And here Ruth and I were married at the embassy, with many friends to wish us God-speed. Mr. Gaynor was a very happy man. He limped a little and used a cane, but could get about so easily that he declared he had renewed his youth. Mother was delighted and admitted that she had always coveted Ruth.

Ah! what happy days those were. We went to England and her two tributaries. Mother declared that I kissed the Blarney stone. She had become quite a foreigner.

How would we ever endure Chicago again?

But one evening, as Ruth's head lay on my shoulder, and her sweet mouth just where I could heap kisses upon it, she said:

"Oh, Norman, I would like to go home. And I know father is longing for it. Everything is beautiful, but I want to ramble about the old places. I want to think of the days when I was a little girl and see the spot where I first came to you."

Had she always been mine? It seemed so now. The other life was like a dream.

Two years had passed away. I am afraid we were a little disenchanted at first. But here were all the old friends—very few of them had dropped out of life. Brave Jesse Walker, the pioneer Methodist preacher, was among the first to welcome mother. And there was Mr. Porter, whose wife had been our earliest school teacher, two or three of the ex-mayors, Mr. Hubbard and the Doles of my boyhood and many another.

The town had not stood still. But the most wonderful thing to me was the invincible push and perseverance and industry, the resolve to establish a great city on those foundation stones, not ancestry, not mere intellectuality. All roads should lead to it as they had to old Rome. Some were started, others planned and there were great dreams. It seemed queer after the finished aspect of the Old World.

The Sontieffs had done very well indeed. Both wives had come, a somewhat severe-looking middle-aged mother, who was sweet and tender at heart, a rather pretty, light-haired young wife of some German

stock a generation or two back, and two very foreign-looking children, such as we had seen in groups in the old cities.

The men had been informing themselves in American ways and methods. They would go farther back and buy government land. Already quite a colony had been formed and two men had been sent out prospecting. It was to be not far from the great canal, but now railroads were being planned. California had given an impetus to us. The Pacific was to be our western boundary. We would not even stop at the Rocky Mountains, and have not those brilliant dreams been fulfilled? Has Chicago proved herself a mere braggart?

Young John Gaynor was a man grown, and as we found soon afterward, had a sweetheart, a fine sturdy, honest-looking young fellow with the breezy voice one insensibly acquires when the spaces are wide.

Homer suggested father very strongly to me. He was building, buying and selling, preferring the nimble sixpence to the slow shilling. They had a new little girl, and they called her Bessy. Sophie was stout and energetic, a lovely mother. Nanette had a little family also, and it seemed as if the population had increased rapidly.

Ben had one year more in the law school. He was coming back to Chicago.

"I want a place to draw a good long breath," he said. "Out here there is room for new States and cities, and a man can forge up to the head sooner. It makes me laugh to hear those Eastern people talk. They

think they have it all. Some day they will wake up mightily surprised."

Chris was doing well and growing really handsome in a more spiritual fashion than any of the other of us boys. He was mother's darling, after all.

It was about autumn before we were truly settled. Mother was to remain with us. The house was enlarged a little and renovated, and partly new furnished. Mother had her furniture in her two rooms, she fancied she might like to keep house by herself, but she never did.

Certainly there was not a happier man in Chicago than John Gaynor, unless it was myself. He trotted about inspecting the new elevators, the new vessels, gathering statistics, as if he were a newspaper reporter. He had not given up what he called his scribbling habit, and his delight was to draw comparisons with the peasantry of the Old World and the New World that had no peasantry.

That Christmas morning a new little girl came to Chicago. The other little girl was only a memory now, just as Old Chicago was fast becoming a memory. But you often heard a group of men exchanging old reminiscences of the time they first came in the early thirties, with a small amount of money on hand, some none at all, going to work with hearty good will.

John Gaynor had thought nothing could make him happier than the return to his native land, but I think his cup ran over that Christmas morning.

There came now and then an unfortunate year, per-

haps that is not the term, a less fortunate year, but Chicago travelled on at her steady pace. West of us were growing up other great States, other cities, crowds of people coming to be fed and housed and finding room to grow broad not only in physique, but in mind and endeavor. So we travelled over in the sixties, when there were ominous clouds gathering and there was a larger question to struggle for than bread and shelter.

John Gaynor went on adding field to field. I laughed at him for a mania. "Ground is a good enough investment for me," he would say. "Thieves can't steal it and fire can't burn it up." But Homer and I were joining forces in building stores and warehouses. For now we were connected with most of the country with railroads. How could we have brought in the grain in ox-carts?

Then followed the four years of the terrible Civil War. Ben, just getting nicely established, threw up his business and went in the army with hundreds of promising young men. The city did its share nobly. Some came back and took their olden places, some were invalidated, and many a home was left vacant.

John Gaynor returned and made another stalwart plunge in newspaper life. Ben opened a new office and went on to realize his dreams. For now Chicago again swept on with giant strides. Did any one raise pigs and chickens in the space about the house, or even garden truck? We raised our town step by step. There were miles of paved streets, and all the modern improvements. The log houses vanished. Stone and marble came in and great buildings were reared.

We were swept onward too, business overtook the old home like a great wave, and we went further up the lake front and modernized ourselves. Since our Paris sojourn mother had taken kindly to improvements. Homer's sons and daughters were growing up. Ruth was married, John Gaynor and his sweet heart had a family clustering about them. Ben was thriving, had captured one or two excellent positions. Chris had gone westward, a very earnest pioneer worker, and we looked sometime to see him made a bishop.

Those were happy years. We had a little flock of four, and though grandfather was proud of the sturdy boys, baby Ruth, the first born, was, I think, the dearest of all to him. The last darling was Bess. They would always be family names.

We had had one other tremendous flood to submerge a part of the city. Then great pains had been taken to protect us from the overflow of the lake. We studied security more than money. When we looked at the splendid buildings did we ever say to ourselves: "This is the great Babylon we have builded!"

There had been a long, dry hot spell. Late corn had withered and scorched up before ripening. Winter wheat was parched. Our pretty flower garden was watered assiduously, and the lawn, but the blossoms drooped, the grass turned brown. What sweltering days they were those September days, with the glowing, pitiless sun that set in a bed of flames that scorched up the kindly dews. It did not seem as if there was any

moisture left in the lake. What would we have done without our splendid water-works!

Then October came in. We had talked of a journey up in Michigan for a little relief, but fortunately we had not gone.

There came up a strong southwest breeze and we took courage, although there was not a cloud in the sky. "But it must rain presently," we all said.

Sitting there on the porch, which was quite a high one, we saw the spires of flame shooting up skyward. It was so far away that we only looked and commented. Whether it was the unfortunate kick of Mrs. O'Leary's cow that sent the lighted lamp over in the hay, as is the commonly received version, or some other fatal incident, the fire broke out in a crowded portion of the city, where old rookeries abounded, always a menace. One almost felt it would safeguard the city to have them burn down, and burn they did. Whether any more vigorous work or alarm could have prevented the spread no one could decide afterward.

But by midnight the conflagration was overwhelming. Fire and wind swept in wild fury. It came northward in two grand, separate columns, tossing its firebrands to the right and the left, and then it made a mighty sweep over the river. Was there ever anything like it for sublimity and terror? The brute creation was crazed. Horses ran wildly about, roared and kicked, the air was filled with cries and screams of maddened people. On and on it flew, whirling great masses of flame from one point to another. Grand hotels, warehouses, stored full of valuables, the Cham-

ber of Commerce, the banks, the great shopping palace of Fields, Leiter & Co.—it was no respecter of persons.

We had sent the two smaller children to bed tired out, but we could not go, fascinated with terror. I knew a great part of my investments were swallowed up—that Homer would lose much of the work of his life. This way and that it dashed. Stone and marble crumbled and went down. There had been the burning Rome and Alexander's orgie at Persepolis—were they to be compared to this?

We had thought ourselves safe, but the demon flew on and on. Nothing could withstand him. We began to pick up our valuables and load whatever wagons we had and send them out toward Lincoln Park. The streets were full of crying, shrieking, homeless people. And when it came nearer, nearer, we, too, joined the throng, but we were all safe together and made our way out where the air was not quite so dense with smoke, and at length dropped on the brown, shrivelled grass, and clasped our arms about each other.

It has been written over many times, the loss and ruin, the indomitable energy of the people, the suffering and the courage, the heartiness with which every one set about mending his broken fortunes and helping his neighbors. Safes and money had perished. But the grand spontaneous outburst of sympathy, the proffers of help from other cities was cheering in the extreme. With one voice they said, and we said, Chicago must be rebuilt in a better and more enduring shape. It is true that many solid structures had gone with the flimsy ones.

There was no more Old Chicago. And the Little Girl had come to middle life, but her eyes had the old light, her lips were soft and sweet as she kissed me that morning in the midst of our desolation.

"We have each other," she said, "and our children and father and mother."

Are some people "born for luck?" as the saying is. If so, surely John Gaynor was. He had sold his summer crops and a good part of his corn, and the day the money was paid him turned it over on a new purchase of prairie land he had made. If it had been in the bank it would have gone to feed the flames.

"I told you land wouldn't burn up," he said. "We have the sure promise until the last great conflagration."

But my row of stores and buildings were gone. I was a poor man and must begin the struggle with business again, if one could find anything to do in such devastation. Homer had fared better. Mother and Ruth and the children accepted their hospitality for the winter.

John Gaynor was near seventy, but brisk and hearty and helpful, hopeful, too, I ought to say. He would have enough to start the four children in life. Why should I worry about them?

How Chicago arose from its ashes, stronger, more magnificent, more durable, and still kept stretching out its thews and sinews in every direction is a matter long since gone into history. Banks, hotels, public buildings and stores could be restored in a more durable manner, streets widened and improved, parks and

squares added, but many things could not be replaced. The grand collection of the Historical Society, and the great Emancipation Proclamation, next to the Declaration of Independence, the Chicago Library, with books and archives, and engravings of old houses and old streets, even then forgotten by many, with other valuable articles that could not be duplicated. Truly, Old Chicago had been swept away.

Did we sit down and weep over the vast ruin such as had never befallen any city? There were starving women and children to have food and shelter, and those who had shared joyfully with these. All that was best and noblest and broadest in humanity came out then. The kindness, the pluck and the courage was something wonderful amid all that destitution and desolation.

Like a romance Chicago rose from her ruins and ashes to be grander than any one had dreamed, and her men again worked their way up to prosperity with indomitable energy. Homer lost less than I, but it was enough to make us poor men. John Gaynor started in afresh with his paper with cheery Yankee spirit. Ben's stock was largely ambitions, and he lived to realize upon them.

I prospered to some extent afterward and we had a happy time. We went out of our own city by railroad to San Francisco. We went up to Oregon, south to famous cities. We were the centre of the country, we were the granary of the West, the East. We helped to feed the starving nations of Europe, that less than sixty years before had believed us an uncouth, half-

Indian people and doubted if any good could come out of Nazareth. It was done by persevering industry, by largeness of aim, by sterling integrity, by the great love of every citizen for his native city, and the desire to see her stand in the front rank.

We built our new house near the lake front again. Little Ruth married when she was barely seventeen, and John Gaynor lived to hold his great-grandson in his arms. A cheerful, happy man, going down the great decline peaceful and content, followed not long after by mother, who was sometimes afraid she had had too many of the good things in this life, but she had always been pitiful to the Lazarus at the gate and not left him to be nursed by dogs.

When Chicago reared the magnificent White City, the like of which no one had yet attempted, we were in the older generation with our grandchildren about us. They never tire of hearing how grandmamma travelled from Massachusetts in a big country wagon, with all the household goods they could carry, crossing New York and Ohio, stopping by the way to catch fish or shoot game and cooking by the wayside in a stone fireplace, sleeping in the wagon, sometimes roused by wild animals, occasionally meeting Indians, and at last reaching Chicago and grandpapa. It is better than the best of their gilded and engraved fairy books.

What days we spent in the White City inspecting the treasures of our own and other countries! What a wonder electricity and the telephone was, and a hundred other things. And the great city stretching out along the lake, southward, westward, northward, its

railroads running swiftly to and fro, its streets a busy hive of the industry that has made her famous.

The trolleys go everywhere and at times we ramble in them or out of them. Here is old Fort Dearborn with the tablet to mark its memory. Did we loiter about it and sit on the steps and recapitulate the massacre? And here was the old Kinzie house, where the San Domingo trader had his cabin, and here the first school I went to, here the old Towner log cabin where the Little Girl lived, and I used to come in and help her get supper, and we read that dear, delightful, stirring "Lady of the Lake." Here we went to Sunday School and walked home together. But dearest of all is the old house where we five boys were born and brought up, because here I first saw the Little Girl as her father lifted her out of the wagon and I glanced into her sapphire blue eyes and loved her forever after.

None of them are there. We look at them through the wizard glass of memory. There is no more Little Girl, there is no more Old Chicago.

Then we kiss each other and go our way. We have lived and loved.

THE END



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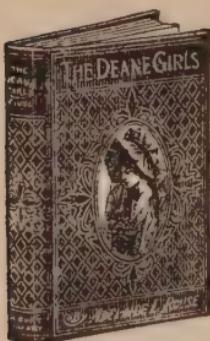
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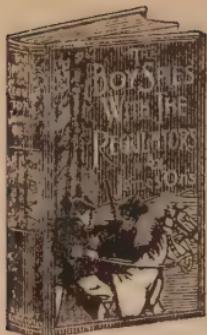
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